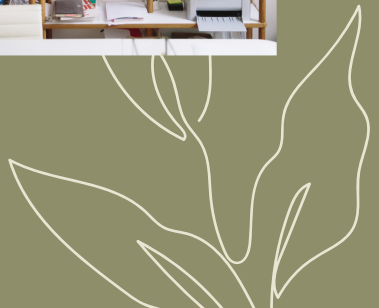




Journey from the Valley of Eshcol to the Promised Land

A Guided Process of Reflection



One: Valley of Eshcol

Numbers 13 & 14

A Place of Disobedience

God had promised Israel that they would be given a land, Canaan, in which to dwell. In Numbers 13-14, Moses sends out scouts to gather information on the land. Despite evidence of great fertility in the Valley of Eshcol, the scouts bring back a report filled with fear because of the giants and walled cities they have observed. Caleb urges them in earnest: *"The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them"* (Numbers 14:7-9). Israel, however, refuses to move forward. In disobedience, they say, *"Let's appoint a leader and return to Egypt"* (Numbers 14:4) - the very land where they had formerly been enslaved for 400 years!!

What is something God has recently asked you to do, either through a commandment in His Word or by a prompting of His Spirit? _____

List any fears or doubts that have come up as a result of God asking you to obey:

Have you made a choice to obey God? What has that obedience looked like? _____

Have you made a choice to disobey? What has that disobedience looked like? _____

An Opportunity to Repent

We are as prone to disobedience as our brothers and sisters in faith, the Israelites. Whenever we choose to disobey, the opportunity is before us to repent - to turn away from our sin and step into obedience. 1 John 1:9 says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*

Is God asking you to repent? Use this process to do so now:

Step 1. Acknowledge your sin to God: _____

Step 2. Remind yourself of the forgiveness available in Jesus: _____

Step 3. Thank God for His mercy: _____

Step 4. Make a plan to move forward in purity and obedience: _____

Two: Wilderness

Numbers 14:26-35

A Place of Consequence

After their disobedience at Eshcol, God told Israel that they would wander in the wilderness for 40 years: *"According to the number of days you have investigated this land, forty days - one day for each year - you will suffer for your iniquities and you will know what it means to thwart me"* (Numbers 14:24). Their deliberate choice not to listen to God led to many consequences, including their death in the wilderness and inability to ever enter God's promised land.

In your choice to disobey, what consequences have come? _____

(Remember, God does not cause evil but He does allow suffering to take place, sometimes using it to discipline us.)

How have these consequences been a sobering reminder of the destructive power of sin? _____

Consequences are designed to lead us to humility. How have you seen God develop humility in your life? _____

An Opportunity to Reflect

After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, the disobedient generation died. Their children were given the opportunity to obey as well as to soberly reflect on what had taken place in their parents' generation.

As you reflect on the consequences of your own sin, what has God taught you?

As you reflect on the consequences you've observed due to others' sins, what has God taught you? _____

A period of waiting is a great time to consider how God is at work. For what are you currently waiting? _____

How do you see God at work during your waiting? _____

Three: The Transjordan

Joshua 2 & 3:1-13

A Place of Obedience

In the book of Joshua, the leadership of Israel has transferred from Moses to Joshua. Joshua sends in two spies to scout the land (again). Here's their report: *"Surely the Lord is handing over all the land to us! All who live in the land are cringing before us!"* (Joshua 2:24). In faith, Israel moves their camp to the Transjordan (the parcel of land immediately East of the Jordan River), preparing to enter the land. Joshua instructs the people to follow the priests carrying the ark of the covenant into the Jordan River and beyond. Israel obeys.

Earlier, you identified what/how you've chosen to disobey. The opportunity is before you today to choose obedience. Will you do so? _____

Obedience does not mean an absence of doubt or fear but a choice to move forward even in the face of fear and doubt. List the doubts and fears that you still have: _____

An Opportunity to Pray

Over and over again, God commands His people to choose courage. Life is hard. It's scary. Without Holy Spirit-generated courage, we are susceptible to be overwhelmed and overtaken by fear. But God is greater than all of our fears.

Meditate on a few of these verses:

"Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:7-9).

"Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

"The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1)

Now, write a prayer asking God to fill you with courageous obedience: _____

Four: Jordan River

Joshua 3:14-17

A Place of Confirmation

Stepping into the Jordan River was **the** proof that Israel had chosen to obey God. Here's how the scene is described: *"So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them...As soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing...So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground"* (Joshua 3:14-17).

Sound familiar? God chose to reprise His miracle of parting the Red Sea by parting the Jordan River. It was a confirmation that His presence had not left Israel. Indeed, He was the same loyal, steadfast, covenant-keeping God who had always and would always love His people.

When we step into obedience, God often brings the blessing of confirmation. How have you seen Him do that in your own life? _____

An Opportunity to Praise

The night before Israel crossed the Jordan River, Joshua said this to the people: *"Tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you"* (Joshua 3:5). When God does amazing things, it's an opportunity to praise, to pour out our gratitude in words, songs, and acts of sacrifice.

If you've recently been obedient and seen God work, list out your praise below!

What has He done that is praiseworthy?

How has He revealed His character?

What comes to mind for ways to actively give Him the praise & glory?

Five: Promised Land

Joshua 4

A Place of Provision

By Joshua 4, Israel has made it to the Promised Land! Yes, they still have a lot of faith-building work ahead of them. But a first, very important step of obedience has led them to a place of rest and provision. Here's how the land is described in Deuteronomy 8:7-9: *"For the LORD your God is bringing you into a **good** land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills."*

How is God providing for you right now? _____

What **good** things has He placed in your life? _____

In this world, we lack many things. And yet, we lack nothing in Christ. What spiritual realities/blessings are you thankful for? _____

An Opportunity to Commemorate

As soon as Israel establishes camp at Gilgal, Joshua sets up a monument: *"And Joshua set up at Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken out of the Jordan. He said to the Israelites, 'In the future when your descendants ask their parents, 'What do these stones mean?' tell them, 'Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.' For the Lord your God dried up the Jordan before you until you had crossed over. The Lord your God did to the Jordan what he had done to the Red Sea when he dried it up before us until we had crossed over. He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you might always fear the Lord your God.'" (Joshua 4:19-24).*

The twelve stones served (1) as a specific reminder of God's power and (2) as a specific call to fear Him always. No matter what Israel would face in coming generations, they would need to know that they were in an everlasting covenant with an all-powerful God.

Because humans are forgetful creatures, God places physical symbols in our paths to call us back to Him. If you were to set up a physical object as a memorial to God's power, what would you use? _____
