

Immerse Day 56 :: April 19

Sibling rivalry. And questioning our leaders. Some things never change. Today we peek behind the curtain of Moses' family. We may think of Moses and Aaron and Miriam as united and godly. But this paints a different picture. A more human picture. And God makes it clear that Moses has been chosen to lead in a special way. That even his siblings must be under his leadership. When do we complain about our siblings? Or our leaders? When have we selfishly asked, "Hasn't God spoken through us, too?" hoping to push aside God's chosen leader for today? I ask this not so much in light of political divisions, but in light of people lining up behind various Christian leaders. We must be careful to listen to God first, and then to accept and support the leaders God brings forth.

And what about this spy mission into the Promised Land? It's as though the 10 saw one thing, and Joshua and Caleb saw something else. Has that ever happened to you? That your assessment of a challenge is completely different than someone else's? Our expectations and previous knowledge color our experiences. Joshua and Caleb thought they could conquer only because God has already promised it to them! They were not making a judgment on what their eyes saw, but on what God had promised. These faithful spies said, "don't be afraid of the people of the land ... they have no protection, but the Lord is with us!"

Sadly, this part of the story leads to a long wilderness detour. I always thought the people of Israel spent a total of 40 years in the wilderness, but at this point of our reading, they have already been out there a while! (They built a Tabernacle, had a census, got organized, received laws, and started regular worship practices.) But the 40 years doesn't even start until now. Until now, the wilderness was just geography between Egypt and Canaan. Now, it's a consequence. And a metaphor. A generation loses the chance to see the promise fulfilled. How very sad! God's promise did not change, but the recipients of that promise did. (I don't know about you, but I want to see as much of God's promises fulfilled as I can.) And then, even after God pronounces judgment on the Israelites, they decide to go anyway into the land. Moses says "Why are you now disobeying the Lord's orders to return to the wilderness? It won't work." We can't just ignore our sin and hope it goes away. Or imagine that God doesn't notice. Or think that God is like a lazy parent who says "You're grounded," but then tells you to jump in the car when you want ice cream. I've been that parent. And I've been that kid! But with God, sin is real. And so are consequences. If we hope to see the promises of God bear fruit in our lives, we must obey and be honest with God. Our obedience doesn't cause the fulfillment of God's promises, but it might change how many miracles we get to witness. Sobering thought.