



Part 2: The Lord Who Goes Before You

Deuteronomy 1:29-33

The better we know our story, the more we see God and are a part of God's story. And when we are a part of God's story, we live a better story.

The Tension: It is sometimes hard to see God in our story.

Questions:

Why don't we see more of God in our story?
How can we see more of God in our story?

Why don't we see God in our story?

- Deuteronomy 1:5-8 describes a faithful God desiring a faithful people. As Moses retells the Israelites' story, he reminds them how he appointed leaders to judge wisely. After being a year at Mt. Sinai receiving the law (Israel Constitution), they head towards the promised land. They send out spies into the land who report, "It is a good land that the Lord our God is giving us" (v. 25). The Israelites rather respond in fear (Deuteronomy 1:26-28). Instead of seeing the goodness of the land, they see the difficulty. Instead of seeing God, they see their lack and believe in lies. And because they don't see God, they walk in fear.
- This is striking because the Israelites have visibly, dramatically, and powerfully seen God at work; when God rescues them from Egypt, he shows signs and wonders such as the 10 plagues against Egypt and then delivers them from the Egyptian army at the Red Sea with a wall of water on their left and on their right. And then Moses and the Israelites sang these words: "I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name." Exodus 15:1-3

The primary reason they struggled to see God in their story is because of their lack of trust. They still had not grown to trust God.

- Which is not surprising as they were still living like they were back in Egypt where they could never trust their Egyptian masters. The Egyptians were inconsistent and cruel. Even with God's tangible examples of his power and presence, they still had a hard time trusting Him. In many ways, their minds and hearts needed to be rewired for God.
- As we talk about trust, it is important to distinguish between trust and clarity. We sometimes think we need to have clarity to trust.
- Brennan Manning in his book *Ruthless Trust* shares a story of John Kavanaugh (brilliant ethicist) asking Mother Teresa for prayer for clarity.
 "She said firmly, 'No, I will not do that.' When he asked her why, she said, 'Clarity is the last thing you are clinging to and must let go of.' When Kavanaugh commented that she always seemed to have clarity he longed for, she laughed and said, 'I have never had clarity; what I have always had is trust. So I will pray that you trust God.'" – Brennan Manning, *Ruthless Trust*

How can we see God in our story?

1. We see God in our story through the lens of His character

- The way we see God will determine how we see God in our story.
 "Earth's crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God, But only he who sees takes off his shoes; The rest sit round and pluck blackberries."—Elizabeth Barret Browning
- In Deuteronomy 1:29-31, Moses reminds the Israelites of who God is. Instead of believing lies, He reminds them of the Lord who goes before them, alluding to the imagery of the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day that led them out from Egypt. It even moved behind them when the Egyptian army approached. This is the God who fights for them and loves them.
- From Tim Mackie and Jon Collins of The Bible Project, watch the main message, "Listen & Love":
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/deuteronomy/>
- In fact, love is mentioned more in Deuteronomy than any other book in the Old Testament. This is because it is a renewing of the covenant, which is God's relational agreement with His people based on a promise. It is a covenant of love.
 "The operative principle within the relationship is that of love; God moved first toward his people in love and they must respond to Him in love. The law of the covenant expresses the love of God and indicates the means by which a man must live to reflect love for God." —Peter Craigie, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament – Deuteronomy*

- This covenant of love is reflected in the imagery of a father carrying a son (Deuteronomy 1:31). A beautiful image of tenderness and strength.
- The more we see the God of love, the more we trust Him and see His love in our story.
“But consider this: if you don’t like your story, then you must not like the Author. Or conversely: if you love the Author, then you must love the story he has written in and for your life.” – Dan Allender, *To Be Told*

2. We see God in our story through the “With God Life”.

- I believe from what I have seen in scripture is that the greatest description of our relationship with God and the expression of his love is to say that “God is with us...and we are with Him.” As some call, the “With God Life” (i.e. Exodus 3:12; 33:15).
- We see and experience more of God as He is with us and we are with Him. God’s presence with the Israelites was a foreshadowing of Jesus coming, who was called, Immanuel, God with us. And through the Holy Spirit, His presence is sealed with us.

Practical Suggestions:

- The Practice of Gratitude: a gateway for God’s presence. It gives us the eyes to see and the heart to respond in joy. Read more on the practice of gratitude here:
<https://greenwoodcc.com/gratitude/>
- Journaling

“Let’s engage the Author of our story so we can enter into the joy he holds before us if we live out our story for the sake of others. If we come to know our story and then give it away, we will discover the deepest meaning in our lives. We will discover the Author who is embedded in our story, and we will know the glory he has designed for each one of us to reveal.”—Dan Allender, *To Be Told*

“How to Listen to Story” by Dan Allender:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NsGWF3ujBI>

“How do you see God in your story?” exercise: How have you seen His faithfulness, His provision, His peace, His healing, and His love?

Small Group Discussion Questions:

- **Head:** Have you ever found it difficult to see God in your story?
- **Heart:** Why do you think it is difficult for you to sometimes see God in your story?
- **Hands:** How can you see more of God in your story through the lens of God’s character? Try journaling your story asking how you see God’s faithfulness, His provision, His peace, His healing, and His love.