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# **Possessing the Promises**

**Part 3**

**511-B**

**Series: Promises and God's Word**



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Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

# Possessing the Promises

## (Part 3)

We have been studying the concepts in the book of Joshua that involve the day-to-day Christian walk. In this lesson we are entering into the third stage of Joshua 1. We are dealing with the concept of possessing the promises of God. In the last two lessons, we have dealt with the fact that there are two basic concepts that have to be balanced. The first is the concept of faith. The second is the concept of grace.

Just as grace was shown when God gave the land to the children of Israel, He has also given all of the promises of Scripture to you. In other words, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness and the other fruits of the Spirit are all yours simply because of who God is. There is absolutely no worthiness on your part or mine. There are no works that we can produce that would merit anything God gives us. It is all a free, undeserved, and often unappreciated gift. On the other hand, the promises are ours. As we recognize that they are free, we have the option and the responsibility by faith to enter into the land and possess those qualities and to possess those promises.

In the last lesson, we dealt with the concept of faith and laying hold of the promises of God. We simply reminded ourselves that all of the promises of God are undeserved. All of the promises of God are positionally ours the moment we receive Christ, that is, all of the love of God is ours the day Christ comes into our hearts.

Secondly, we have to appropriate experientially that love on a day to day basis by entering in by faith and believing that all that God has is available to the man or the woman who believes in all that God is. The whole concept is that positionally it is ours, but experientially we begin to obtain it.

The third thing is that the promises of God are usually conditional. There are a few, such as Peter 1 that are not conditional for the believer.

Such is our eternal place in heaven, which is undefiled and fades not away.

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But most of the promises are accompanied by the two-letter word “if”. If My people who are called by My name. If any of you lack wisdom. In other words, there is something that we are usually to do conditionally to receive the promises.

The fourth area was that often the promises require action as evidence of our faith.

The fifth area was that this quality of faith given by God is controlled by His timing. His timing can be delayed by disobedience as it was with Jonah. It can be delayed for more perfect glory as it was with Moses and Pharaoh. It can be delayed for character change as we read in James 1 and Hebrews 10.

The sixth area we dealt with in the last lesson is possibly the most important one. The promises of God usually relate to things which are spiritual rather than things that are temporal. It is the mind of man and the flesh of man that often wants to take spiritual provisions and translate them into physical promises. When we are promised things that are circumstantial, they are usually first minimal in nature or designed to give maximum use of what we have. In the case of the children of Israel in the wilderness, they had shoes and clothes that wouldn't wear out. Secondly, they were to teach spiritual truths such as: man does not live by bread alone. Thirdly, they were to benefit the body of Christ as a whole rather than to meet their own selfish needs. Fourthly, they were to bring an increasing amount of glory to God.

The last area dealt with the concept that to claim the promises of God means entering into warfare with the enemy. The promises are ours. Every piece of land that the children of Israel had to obtain, they did so knowing that God had provided the victory, but knowing also they had to have an encounter with the enemy in order to receive the victory.

In the last lesson, I gave some illustrations of how you pray for patience showing that there is a process of tribulation that is necessary for patience. Each of these promises carry with it certain encounters with the enemy through which God gives us the quality of life that we are praying for.

We want to conclude the study of possessing the promises by trying to deal with the reality of it. We have talked theoretically for the most part. How do we just get alone with God and really possess these promises in prayer? How do we keep the delicate

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balance between timid faithlessness and bold presumption? We need this perspective so we won't come boldly into the presence of God and say, "Hey God, this is what You promised. Gimme." Or so, we won't have a timid, faithless approach and shrink back and say, "But Lord, I don't really have anything to say to You. Whatever You want to say is fine."

In the middle there is a beautiful balance of approaching God with an attitude of humility, but with a confidence of the promises. Remember that confidence is based upon doctrinal truth, but humility is based upon an attitudinal response. You can be confident and therefore bold and, at the same time, be humble in spirit. That is the balance that most of us never really achieve in our prayer lives. We need to have the ability to come boldly into the throne of grace and be able to claim the promises of God and see prayers answered. On the other hand, to come in such a state of humility, based upon the grace of God, that we are not demanding anything of a holy God. We are coming with total recognition that based upon who He is and what He has promised and what He has done, we are simply naming for Him the promises that He has already made. In a spirit of unworthiness, we can lay claim to that which He has given us.

Do you see the difference? Doctrinally they are ours, take them. However, we need to come in the right spirit, because the promises have been given to us by a sovereign God who is love. Enter in with a spirit of humility based upon who He is.

There are many examples of this in the Scripture such as the death of Lazarus when his sisters come to Jesus. They were a little bit confused on points, but they had total confidence doctrinally that Jesus could have saved Lazarus from dying. There was no doubt, but they came to Him in a spirit of humility. They said, "Lord, if You had been here, because of who You are, this would never have happened."

Another example would be Jesus in the garden. He had total knowledge of who God was. Therefore, He was able to come boldly into the throne of God and say, "If You desire to let this cup pass from Me, You can find another way. Nevertheless, Thy will be done." He was seeking to subject Himself to the will of the Father, in a spirit of humility. Doctrinally, He knew exactly who God was and that He could do anything He pleased.

In this lesson, we are going to take a journey to Exodus 32.

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I want to try to go through two chapters in this lesson. In Exodus 32 we are going to deal with principles. Moses was the one man who was able to come into the presence of God with boldness, to intercede for the children of God and to claim the promises of God. The reason he could intercede was that he was the meekest man in all the earth. How do you reconcile those two facts? That is the whole key, I believe, to our learning to pray aright as far as the promises are concerned. There are two points that are important.

Key 1- The key to Moses' boldness is that he knew the Word of God. This is why he could be so bold before God. He knew exactly what God planned to do. He knew what God would do and wouldn't do. He knew exactly what the mind of God was in relationship to the promises He had given the children of Israel. There was boldness in his step, boldness in his voice and boldness in his prayers because he knew the Word of God.

Key 2- The key to Moses' humility was that he knew the author. He was bold because he knew the Word of God, but he was humbled because he knew the One who wrote it. We all want to be like the Apostle Paul. We all want to be like George Mueller. But, none of us seem to want to pay the price. The time he invested in the Word, and the time he invested in the presence of God are what enabled Moses to have that delicate balance of boldness coupled with humility. Our priorities get so out of whack that we think we have only two or three-hundred hours to waste. There is not possibly enough time to spend in the presence of God and not enough time to spend in the Word of God. What we don't realize is that this ability to claim the promises and enter in with boldness coupled with humility is a quality that comes over a period of time from time spent in the Word and time spent with the author of the Word. If you and I think that we can side step that which gives us the quality that we want ultimately, we are wrong. There is no way. How much time do you literally spend in the Bible? How much time do you spend alone with God? That is the balance.

Let's go to Exodus 32:1. This is the setting. Moses was alone in the presence of God on the mountaintop. Joshua was alone at the bottom of the hill with God. Aaron was in the doghouse. The children of Israel were down in the valley getting itchy for a new spiritual experience. This is how it all begins. In other words, the children of Israel had the WHYDFMT Syndrome. This is "What

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Have You Done For Me Today?” Syndrome. They had passed through many experiences where God had just poured Himself into them and onto them, but they couldn't see where, in the last few days, He had anything spectacular. They were living from spiritual experience to spiritual experience rather than being grounded in the Word and the person of God. They wanted some new experience to take place.

Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down  
from the mountain, (Exodus 32:1a NKJV)

The original Hebrew translation says: as perchance, the feline attendant be removed, the rodent participants have tendency to frolic. This literally means that when the cat is away, the mice will play. So when the people saw that Moses took his time coming down the hill,

the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him,  
“Come, make us gods that shall go before us;”  
(Exodus 32:1b NKJV)

Principle 1- God often tests His people's commitment through delays. God could have hurried up the program and sent Moses down the hill knowing that the people were getting a little bit antsy, but He didn't do that, did He? He allowed the delay because He was testing to find out where their loyalty really was. He found out. He finds out with us, too.

Principle 2- The inner drive of man's rebellion says: “Make us gods.” (It is in verse 1.) You can underline any word you like. You can underline “Make us gods.” Or you can underline “Make us gods.” They were literally saying, “Make us gods.” The children of Israel were again seeking something to touch and experience and talk about. They wanted a new, vibrant, spiritual experience. They were saying, “Make us something we can see.”

I want to give you a formula to chew on. Seek God and experience life. Seek experience and lose your vision of God. Seek God and experience life. That is what they had done. You cannot keep your eyes on the experience and on the giver of the experience at the same time. Once you begin to focus on the experience, you forget how to discern the source of that experience. Before long you forget just who it is who is motivating you and changing your life. The enemy can enter in so subtly with new experiences. While we get so excited about those experiences, we forget the presence and the person and the work of God.

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Principle 3- This is the TWM Syndrome. This stands for the Teeny, Weenie Memory Syndrome and is found at the end of verse one,

“for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.”

(Exodus 32:1c NKJV)

What memories they had. Can you just think back in your mind’s eye of all the things that had transpired between Moses and these people up until now? If they had any reason to doubt his authority and the Word of God, I don’t know what it would be. But they are just like we are. They looked around and said, “We can’t remember for sure what happened to Moses. We don’t know for sure what it was that Moses was trying to do.”

They did know. They saw him go up the mountain. They saw the glory of God. They knew what was happening. But they wanted a new experience, and they were tired of waiting. Their memories had just vanished. It says:

“for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.”

They did acknowledge that he brought them out of Egypt. I thought that was big of them. The King James says, “wot not.” This literally means that they don’t know what happened to Moses, so they had to do something else.

Principle 4- Wrong concepts of leadership lead to wrong concepts of obedience. They forgot about Moses. They had set Moses up as their leader, but they had forgotten the God that Moses represented. They were worshipping Moses. When Moses was gone, what were they going to do? They were going to get a new leader. They were going to get a new program. They were going to get a new experience. They had forgotten not only the God who gave Moses his power, but also the teachings that Moses had given about the God who gave Moses his power. They had forgotten the whole program. They thought, “Moses is gone. Get us something new.”

Principle 5- Weak leadership is the ruin of God’s people. Here comes Aaron. The people came to Aaron and said, “Aaron, we’ve got a problem. Moses is gone. We don’t even remember what he was like. We are getting tired. We want something new to happen. Why don’t you give us some kind of worship experience that doesn’t relate to Jehovah?” In verses 2 and 3, Aaron subscribed



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to the politicians creed: Give them what they want and then they will want what you give them. They said, “Aaron, just make us some kind of idol to worship. We will be happy again.”

Aaron said, “My job is to keep the people happy.” Let’s look at what he did.

And Aaron said to them, “Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.”

So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron.

And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, “This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!”

So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.”  
(Exodus 32:2-5 NKJV)

Principle 6- The end does not justify the means when it comes to worshipping. For the sake of time I won’t elaborate on that.

Let’s go on now and see the first conversation between Moses and God. Let’s begin with Exodus 32:7.

And the Lord said to Moses, “Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves.

They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!’”  
(Exodus 32:7,8 NKJV)

In the conversation between God and Moses, God introduced the subject of what the Israelites were doing and He had a perfect knowledge of the people’s sin. Have you ever gone to God and said, “I’ve got to confess this, but You are going to find out anyhow. Lord, I just want to tell You what took place in my mind or in my life this week. I just wanted to get to You before somebody else did with the story.” God, the very second we sin, is totally and completely aware of everything that goes on. That is why He wants us to confess it instantaneously so that the fellowship can be restored.

The second thing we learn is God’s use of leadership and

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Moses' sensitivity to God. All God had to do was to reach down with a lightning bolt and He could have wiped out the children in the valley then started over with Moses. But, God wanted to test Moses as much as He wanted to meet the needs of those people. He called Moses aside. That was His purpose. His purpose was to test Moses' concept of God. The same thing was true in His experience with Job. So He called Moses over and put him to the test. I don't know how you would respond to this test. I've already figured out how I would. It wouldn't have been very good. Let's continue,

And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people!" (Exodus 32:9 NKJV)

God had a thorough knowledge of their hearts. His conclusion was that they had stiff necks. He didn't recommend an orthopedic surgeon or a chiropractor. What He did recommend was that they be chopped up so that He could start over. He said,

"Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation." (Exodus 32:10 NKJV)

I was so overwhelmed when I read this passage that I probably can't communicate to you what overwhelmed me. The first thing that overwhelmed me was the fact that God said to Moses, "This is My plan provided you don't intervene."

Test 1- He said, "Now Moses, if you will leave Me alone." This is the God of the universe, and He set Moses in a position of intercession.

He said, "Moses, if you don't intervene, this is what I plan to do." What a test.

He said, "If you don't intervene, I will let My wrath wax hot. I am going to consume the people and start all over with you."

Look at how God tested Moses. He tested Moses' knowledge of God's way first. Moses knew that wasn't the heart of God to do that. He knew it was a test.

Test 2- God tested Moses' humility. How would you like to be in that situation? He had a chain around his neck with these people. Circumstances were awful. He had been through crisis after crisis with them. God said, "Look, I'll tell you what I'll do. I will wipe them out and give you a new people. Forget them. Let's start over with you. You're it."

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In other words, “Do you want to build up yourself, or do you want to build up God?” Which would glorify God the most? This is the question that went through Moses’ mind as he passed the test.

Test 3- God tested Moses in his love for his people. These people were stinkers. They gave Moses nothing but trouble. At every turn they complained. They murmured. They tried to stone him. They didn’t like his wife. They didn’t like his ways. They didn’t like anything about him. He had an opportunity now to clean the carpet and start over with a whole new batch of troops.

But, Moses was in love with his people. He loved them not because of what they did, but because of who they were in the sight of God. Moses passed the test. This is how God approached him.

If you and I didn’t know better, we would think that Satan was talking to him, wouldn’t we? But it was God talking to him. The reason we know this is that a) it says He was and b) He was telling him truth, total truth.

*God said, first of all, that these troops were not worth saving.* This was true. God said, “I’ve seen these people, and they are stubborn and rebellious.”

*Secondly, however, He said, “The key, Moses, lies with you. If you will leave Me alone, I will consume them, and I will give you a better group to work with.* Moses, what do you care most about, the program and your success or these wayward, rebellious people? The choice is yours. Do you want Me to change your circumstances Moses? Do you want Me to change this bunch of losers? I will wipe out the problem, but it is all up to you.”

Here is Moses’ response in verses 11-13. Notice at least four things about his response.

a) He achieved a balance in his response between faith and grace. He recognized that God had given him authority. “Moses, if you intervene, I will have to change My mind. If you don’t, this is what I plan to do.” He understood the promises of God. He understood his position. Secondly, he entered into the conversation in a spirit of total humility. He didn’t deserve that position, and he wanted to be so careful how he used it.

b) He related the entire issue to God rather to himself and his circumstances. Can you imagine how we would communicate with

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God about this problem? We would say, “Lord, do You remember what these troops did to me over here? Do You remember all the trouble they have given me? Lord, do You know how I feel about this? Lord, do You know what is going through my mind? Lord, I want to be sure that You understand how I justify my decisions.” This is how I would respond. But, instead, Moses related the whole issue to God. He always related His Word, His worth and His works. He said, “You have delivered them before, I know You can do it. You never break Your promise. You never humiliate Your name. I know who You are.”

In verses 13-14, Moses said, “I remember the promise You made to Abraham, Isaac and Israel, the promise of Your seed. I know Your Word is true.”

Moses related the whole issue to God and to the mind of God to His Word, His works and His worth. That is the way we are supposed to pray. We focus on us. Moses focused on God. He then had the mind of God. He knew what God wanted him to do.

c) This is a ticklish one. This is a delicate balance. Moses begins to reason with God. If you reason with God without these first two steps, what you are doing is, in the energy of flesh, pitting your wisdom against God's. But Moses, first of all, recognized the delicate balance between grace and faith. He took the whole issue and framed it with the mind of God. Then, having done that, he was in a position to reason with God. He went before God, boldly then, in a spirit of humility, but boldly.

He said, “Lord, forgive me, but I want to talk to You about this thing.” He reasoned with God.

He said, “Your reputation is at stake. God, Your plan is intact if You don't stop now. God, Your promises are secure, don't change Your mind now. Based on Your mercy which endures forever, this thing can still work.”

Moses never forgot that God was God, but he began to reason with God. What a delicate thing to do. If you don't believe it, read Numbers 14 and 15. There are a number of places where Moses had to intercede and plead with God. He did so in such a way that there was boldness coupled with humility.

d) God relents and repents. Now be careful that you understand the meaning of that word, repent. Psalm 106 says:

Wondrous works in the land of Ham, Awesome things by the

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Red Sea.

Therefore He said that He would destroy them, Had not  
Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach, To  
turn away His wrath, lest He destroy them.

(Psalm 106:22,23 NKJV)

It was a real threat. It was a real situation. The children of Israel were told later that had it not been for Moses, they would have been destroyed.

What does it mean that God repented? It certainly wasn't because Moses said so, was it? Can you ever think of a prayer when Moses interceded and didn't get his way? There is one in Deuteronomy. Look at the difference between these two prayers. In Deuteronomy, Moses went before the Lord and said, "Lord, You told me I couldn't enter into the land. I know that. That is the promise, but how about breaking that promise and letting me go in? I'm a good troop. I've been a good guy. I didn't make many mistakes. You are a good God." God said, "I beg your pardon, Moses. I have a job for you." Moses said, "What is that?" God replied, "I want you to hush and go to the grave in peace."

The whole idea was, in that case, he was praying with a self-oriented prayer. He was praying contrary to the promises of God. He was coupling boldness without humility. God heard him, but didn't give him what he wanted.

Look at the difference here. He wasn't praying for himself, he was praying for the children of Israel. He was not praying contrary to the promises of God. He was claiming the promises of God. He was not praying without humility, but he was humbling himself and referring to the grace of God. What happened? God gave him his request with power and authority.

Most of the prayers of the saints of God that had power attached to them were prayed for somebody else. You and I think that to claim the promises of God basically means that we lift up the things that we want and take them before the throne of grace and say, "Dear Lord, I love You. Please gimme." We think this is claiming the promises of God, whether it be in the physical or spiritual realm.

Look at Paul's life. There are a few times that you can find Paul claiming the promises of God for himself; but it says in Colossians, Philippians and Ephesians that he spent the entirety of his time in prison on his knees before God for the children of

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Israel. He was praying for the Jewish and Gentile believers. He pleads with God over and over and over. He said, “My whole life is a prayer for you. I claim this promise for you that you may know the height and depth and breadth and width of God’s love for you. I claim this promise for you that you may come to know what is the fullness of the love of God. I pour myself into you and claim these promises. God is going to honor those promises.”

I want to ask you one more time to go home and look at your prayer list and see how self-oriented it really is. See how often, when the chips are down, that the bulk of the intensity of our concern is for ourselves. The power in Moses’ prayer is that he was forgetting about Moses. What would have been best for Moses? Getting rid of the people and setting up a new kingdom and pressing on would have benefited him. What would have been best for the kingdom of God? It would be to maintain the reputation of God, punish and deal with the children of Israel and then start over. That was God’s program.

I think it is important that we realize that God was not sitting in a rocking chair in heaven scratching His head in a state of indecisiveness about what to do. When it says that God repented, it didn’t mean that God had chosen a course of action and was persuaded, and in a moment of emotional uncertainty, changed His mind and said, “Okay, Moses, I will change My mind, and we will do it this way.” That is not what it means when it says that God repented. It means that God had two choices of action already set aside. One plan was if Moses interceded. One plan was if Moses did not intercede. When Moses did intercede, He turned around and followed the course of action that He had predetermined had Moses interceded. In other words, He had two choices of action already determined before the foundation of the world. Moses had the choice. God responded to what Moses had done, but it wasn’t because He was sitting around trying to make up His mind. It was because He knew what His heart was, and He had given Moses a choice.

That is the way it is with our lives. God puts us in positions and gives us choices. Relating to the choices we make, He changes our lives and the lives of those about us. But, it is not because He is sitting in heaven in a state of indecisiveness and is moved by something we do and changes His course of action. Before the foundation of the world, He had more than one course of action. It is dependent upon the activity of our will.

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Principle 7- Involvement. It is at the end of the first conversation with God, and notice that involvement comes after the intercession. How many of you have prayed for your relatives and said, “Lord, I want you to do a great work, and I claim this promise for my relative, for my sister, for my brother. Praise God.”? We close our Bible and end our quiet time. We get up and the phone rings. It is our brother or sister. He says, “I was wondering if you could come over and talk to me. I need some counsel about something.” We respond, “I don’t really have time to right now. I’ve got a lot going on. But, I’ve been praying for you.” Wow.

Moses probably would have liked to stay on the mount a little longer and let the thing downstairs get straightened out. He prayed, “Lord, don’t do this to the people. Let’s give them another chance.” God said, “Okay. Tell you what I’m going to do, Moses. I’m going to send you down the mountain. You have interceded and now you’ve got to get involved.”

How many of you have prayed for your church and said, “Lord, we need so desperately for this to take place in our church body.” A few days later the pastor will come up to you and will talk to you about the very area you were praying about. He might say, “I’d like for you to have a part in the solution to this problem.” You say, “I don’t have time to get involved, but I’m sure going to pray.”

We forget sometimes that intercession is usually followed by involvement. Moses wanted to go back and finish his quiet time. God said, “I’m sorry. You’ve got to go back down the hill. We’ve got a tough job down there, and you’re in charge.”

Principle 8- God conserves raw materials. It is found in verse 15. He wrote the testimony on both sides of the tablets. I am tremendously wasteful with things, but God doesn’t waste a thing. I’m sure if we could spread them out and see them all at once, we would see that He wrote on one side and then turned them over and wrote on the other side. Another reason is I don’t know how Moses would have hauled them down the mountain otherwise. I couldn’t help but see that there was a principle there.

A principle is a concept in a passage of Scripture that is borne out consistently through the rest of Scripture.

Principle 9- There was no glory in this situation for Moses.  
We read:

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Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets.

(Exodus 32:16 NKJV)

Moses couldn't even get credit for taking shorthand. That is grace.

Principle 10- Moses' power was not based upon his sinlessness, but rather on his faithfulness. He is a plain, vanilla guy like the rest of us. He went down the hill. He knew what was going on. He had interceded for the people, and God had miraculously said okay. He got down, saw what was going on and picked up the tablets that God, with His own hands, had taken the time to write, threw them down in a fit of anger and broke them. He said, "I'll show you."

In the next lesson, we will deal with the rest of Moses' prayer when he came down from the mountain. He had to deal with Israelis disobedience. The people had to taste of the fruit of what they had done and be punished. He then had to go before God and have a conversation with God. If you and I could enter into and translate that conversation into our lives, it would revolutionize our prayer life. It is found in Exodus in the last of chapter 32, all of chapter 33 and the first part of 34. It is a time when Moses and God were intertwined in a conversation and relationship with the Word, on one hand, and with the fellowship of God on the other. They were relating one to another. The miraculous thing, as a preview to the next lesson, is that the more God answered Moses' prayers, the more of God Moses wanted. That is the way it will be with us.

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