

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Third Sunday in Lent — March 3, 2024

“I am the Lord your God . . .”

- Exodus 20:2 -

Has a child ever taught you to play a game? They tend to make the rules as they go along. Just when something is about to go wrong, the child interrupts with a new rule. They tell you to jump three times on one foot and then turn around in circles until they can do what they need to do to win. An exaggeration perhaps, but most adults will nod in agreement. While game playing is a way to teach children how to follow rules, sometimes it is fun to let them play the games their way. We don't always have to win, do we? The key to being a good parent is to learn the balance between fun and training. We learn to pick our battles. Children have to learn how to lose, but does it have to happen during a game of Candy Land? Playtime can have a much more important purpose: to build relationships.

It is important to establish a relationship with a child in those early years, to build trust even before rules are established. We see this in the relationship of God with His people. God had been in a relationship with His people for a very long time, but they had lived in Egypt for four hundred years. While there was a memory of the God of Abraham, they had lost touch with Him. They were like children who needed to learn to trust His voice again.

God sent Moses to restore the relationship and deliver them into freedom. God saved them and led them through the desert toward the Promised Land. They learned that He is a deliverer and provider. They witnessed God's hand at work. He proved that He is trustworthy. God used the journey to build the relationship; He loved them and they learned to love Him.

The rules given at Sinai are not burdensome; they are a gift given to help us be right with God and our neighbors. They begin by establishing God's place in our lives. “I am the Lord your God.” The rest of the commandments build trust between people. As we dwell in that right relationship with God, He transforms our nature so that we will be His people, obedient to His Word and in relationship to one another.

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