

Highly Toxic Land

What happens if you are assigned by God to a piece of land, you lean into it, and get badly whipped in the process? Why would God do that to you?

Well, the first answer is that God often gets the blame for sending someone somewhere when He did not. I know God does at times send us into deeply painful situations, but I think many of those who claim "God told me . . ." about myriad topics are not entirely accurate.

But supposing He did send you to either live on a piece of land which is incredibly challenging, or assign you to work on a piece of land intermittently without living on it, how do you process unrelenting failure?

Here is a grab bag of possible reasons, in no particular order.

1) Sometimes we get whipped because we have self-righteousness in our lives. This is elegantly illustrated in Judges 19-21. There was an issue of homosexuality in the tribe of Benjamin and the other tribes gathered to do war against "those wicked men" who had committed "this awful crime."

They asked God who should go first and God clearly said (according to Scripture, not just them, so there can be no doubt of the accuracy of the statement) that Judah should go first.

It seemed like an honor to lead the massacre. After all, there were 400 thousand Israeli soldiers against a paltry 26,700 Benjamites.

Only problem was, the massacre went the other way, as Israel lost 22 thousand soldiers. One would assume that the losses from the tribe of Judah were the highest.

They were horrified and went back to the Lord with quite a bit more care. This time instead of asking who should go first, they asked whether they should go at all. God assured them that He absolutely wanted them to go up the next day and do battle against the Benjamites.

They did, still outnumbering them massively, and they lost another 18 thousand soldiers which puts their casualties at 10% of the original army. What an interesting figure.

They were shell-shocked and made a really big deal about it with the Lord, and this time He not only told them to go to war again, but assured them of victory.



The third day they were utterly unstoppable and Benjamin was reduced to a mere 600 surviving men.

So . . . what happened on days one and two?

God doesn't say, but here is my theory.

Sure Benjamin was guilty of homosexuality on a broad scale, and sure they were defiant about protecting both the homosexual community as well as the specific group of men who had committed the gang rape and murder.

But long before the polarizing incident, Israel HAD to know about the iniquity there and they did nothing about it. Then when it was politically correct, they got all huffy and denounced the "wicked men."

God did not fall for it at all. And I think the reason He put Judah in front the first day was because they were the leadership tribe and the tribe geographically contiguous to Benjamin and therefore had the greatest guilt for being silent all that time.

After God had spanked them royally for their sins of silence and their cowardice about addressing the problem in their midst, He could turn His attention to Benjamin. But self-righteousness didn't impress Him much.

We humans are really skilled at spin. Unfortunately, we too often are white hot in anger against sin outside us in order to cover something less obvious inside us we don't want to deal with.

So if you are getting pummeled on a land assignment, consider taking a month off and asking God to show you if there is a blind spot in your life that is connected to your powerlessness.

2) A second common cause is that God wants us to build endurance, and the only way He can do that is through "weight lifting."

When there are spiritual issues that we engage voluntarily, and things get tough, it is awfully easy to quit. I think that lack of endurance is one of the most pervasive problems of the average middle class American whose biggest challenge was to finish college.

However, if we are living on or next to land that is toxic, it brings the battle to us in a relentless manner, and we find out to our surprise that it is possible to get up at 2:00 a.m. and war for two hours after a hard day's work.

So at times, it has little to do with the land itself. God is merely grooming us for something significant in the future and in order to get us tough enough to do what we need to do next year, He traps us on hostile land this year.



3) Then there is the issue of learning strategy. So often we become accustomed to our ten silver bullets, but if God wants to grow us by showing us a new area, He simply takes us to a place where all our resources don't work and we either need to read widely or hear directly from Him about how to proceed.

Often the land is not an isolated issue. Sometimes in addition to dealing with the sins committed on the land we have to address the underground aquifers, or ley lines, or portals, or the decisions of a governmental agency relative to the land, or linkage with time, or buried artifacts, or the redemptive gift of the land and iniquity related to its design.

These are not generic issues, and it can take a lot of time and effort to try this and that and the other, all the while gaining minor victories which point the way, while failing to score a knockout blow.

4) Sometimes He is building our spiritual authority for something in the future. I confess I don't understand all the spiritual connections here, but I have seen it work many times.

When I was living in Whittier I was very dedicated to working on the patch of land I was responsible for. We saw great results — the measurable, verifiable, sustained results we like.

Accidents on the corner of Valley View and Leffingwell dropped from once a week to once a year. A church which had struggled for years elsewhere came to our patch, and in the first year they baptized 50 new converts. In one year, one quarter of the homes were refurbished outside.

All told, it was a very significant improvement, with the exception of one business. That business was pretty dark so I proceeded to war against it. I managed to drive one owner out of business, but the guy who came in after him was even darker.

I spent eleven years on that project and could not see that I made any headway at all. Of course I don't know what went on inside, and possibly there was a difference I could not see, but for sure I failed utterly at shutting down the business.

However, something happened in me as a result of that losing battle, and since then, I have had significant authority to bless businesses and to shut them down — in a lot less than eleven years.

How does it work? No clue. I am merely saying that so often I see people walking in high authority in some area where they once spent a disproportionate amount of time and effort and were thoroughly blocked, defeated and discouraged.

5) Sometimes our focus is too large or too small. On the one hand, I marvel at people who single-handedly take on an entire county. On the other hand, many people will not be able to clean up their own property until they address a larger area that is interconnected.



One indicator of “a land package” is if you see consequences nearby when you do something positive. One person cleansed a newly purchased property and a house a block away promptly caught fire and burned down for no real convincing reason. In another area, every time the warrior couple did some work on their land, some cows died on a nearby farm.

Those kinds of things are indicative of a regional defilement which is being sustained by a covenant of protection. When you set something free over here, the demon in charge of the covenant of protection promptly re-empowers through some form of violence in another part of “his” parcel of land.

6) And then there are the pieces of land that are quite toxic and none of the above applies. We play our hearts out. We grow. We learn. We mobilize teams. We bring the earned authority to bear. We wait. We endure.

And at the end of the day, there seems to be no value at all either now or later to what we have done. All we have is battle scars.

These things remind us that at the end of the day we are still finite creatures fighting a big battle, and the only thing we can be absolutely sure of is that Father still loves us, and that Christ was raised from the dead on the third day and will for sure write the final chapter.

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