

Give Me This Mountain!

A little boy was afraid of the dark. One night his mother told him to go out to the back porch and bring her the broom. The little boy turned to his mother and said, "Mama, I don't want to go out there. It's dark." The mother smiled reassuringly at her son. "You don't have to be afraid of the dark," she explained. "Jesus is out there. He'll look after you and protect you." The little boy looked at his mother real hard and asked, "Are you sure he's out there?" "Yes, I'm sure. He is everywhere, and he is always ready to help you when you need him," she said. The little boy thought about that for a minute and then went to the back door and cracked it a little. Peering out into the darkness, he called, "Jesus? If you're out there, would you please hand me the broom?"

Change and uncertainty is tough for many of us. We don't like it. It hurts, it makes us uncomfortable, it requires effort and faith to adapt to new situations. It is so much easier when things remain the same.

I want us to look at a person who was very unique in the bible. One who was a young man when the Exodus started, he was one of only two who had left Egypt as an adult who actually arrived in the promised land 40 years later. He had the unique distinction of being one of the 12 spies who entered the promised land 39 years before, who didn't see giants, but saw a land flowing with milk and honey. **He was adaptable because he saw life through the eyes of faith.**

Last week, I said that "Faith is faith when God is all we are holding onto." I shared the illustration of the kitten holding onto the basket by her claws. As you and I look at 2003 and the uncertainties that it holds, we must learn to walk by faith.

1. Faith focuses on the possibilities, the potential, not the problems
2. Faith relies on God's abilities, not our own abilities
3. Faith is not content with the path of least resistance, but asks for the mountain!

Numbers 13:17-20 "When Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, he said to them, "Go up there into the Negev; then go up into the hill country. "See what the land is like, and whether the people who live in it are strong {or} weak, whether they are few or many. "How is the land in which they live, is it good or bad? And how are the cities in which they live, are {they} like {open} camps or with fortifications? "How is the land, is it fat or lean? Are there trees in it or not? Make an effort then to get some of the fruit of the land." Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes."

1. Spies sent in:

- a. Caleb is one of those leaders - the recognized leader of the tribe of Judah, largest of the 12 tribes. He is about 40 years old. And he sets out on the mission with the other 11 leaders, one from each tribe.

Give me this Mountain

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Page 1

3/29/2007

- b. They are on a mission to explore Canaan, the promised land, the land flowing with milk and honey.
 - i. The Hebrew language has two words for spying.
 - 1. One (latour) means to seek good and has the same root as the modern Hebrew word for "Tourist" (tayyar). Tourists look for good things to enjoy wherever they go. Singaporeans love to be tourists.
 - 2. But the other word for spy (leragel) means to look for weaknesses.
 - a. Later in Joshua 2, the second Hebrew word for spy - "seeking out weaknesses" is used, when Joshua prepares to invade Canaan after Moses' death. Two spies are sent out, who stay with Rahab the prostitute as they seek out weaknesses in preparation for conquest.
 - 3. But that is not the task of the 12. They are not there to spy out the problems.
 - a. They are to first examine the potential, the possibilities, the abundance the land has to offer.
 - b. Moses to appoints a team to spy out the good -- to examine the resources of this land. They are to give a general report on what cities are available to be taken, what land is available and how fertile, and what people inhabit it.
 - c. Since they will be dividing up the land between the 12 tribes, it is important that representatives from all the tribes be in on this initial tour of the land. These leaders are to come back and ignite the hearts of the 12 tribes with delight as they reported the riches and the magnificence of the promised land.
 - d. God wanted to use these leaders to encouraged the people to take possession of the promised land.
 - c. And the land does have great potential. When the spies return, they carry a huge cluster of grapes so huge it took two men to carry it-- the fruit of the land -- on a pole between them. In the desert they'd probably never seen grapes. In their wildest imagination they hadn't conceived of grapes like these.
 - i. Let's read what they said. Look at Numbers 13: verses 27-29, "*They gave Moses this account: 'We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. (and I am sure they held up the cluster of grapes for all to see) ...**But** the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea along the Jordan.'*"
 - ii. Wait a second. They forgot their mission.
 - 1. Remember their mission?

- a. Their mission was to report on the possibilities, the potential - not the problems.
- 2. Their report is like one of those good news bad news jokes.
 - a. The good news is the land does flow with milk and honey.
 - b. The bad news is Mike Tyson already lives there.
 - c. The Giants- the Anak are all over, the Amalekites own the Negev, the hill country is occupied by three separate peoples and the Canaanites control the coastal region.
 - d. Its an **impossible** mission.
- 3. Forgetting your Mission leads to FAILURE.
 - a. Many of the 18th century missionaries who departed for Africa packed their belongings in a pine box--their coffin. They knew they might only be there for 2 or 3 years--but they wouldn't be leaving. They'd be dead. On their graves, the great penetration of Africa with the Gospel was accomplished. Where is that level of commitment today? A lack of commitment means we run home at the first sign of trouble. They carried their mission with them.
 - b. EXAMPLES?
- iii. I'm also not convinced that the land was a place of milk and honey was necessarily obvious to the casual observer. Yes, there were grape clusters too big for one man to carry and pomegranates and figs, but anyone who has been to Palestine can testify that the land is more like Arizona than Iowa.
 - 1. The desert sprouts, but only in response to hard work and irrigation.
 - 2. I suspect Caleb and Joshua saw more potentiality than reality, but to a person of faith, reality is just potential plus time plus effort plus God
 - 3. It's also not true that Caleb and Joshua failed to see the giants in the land or the fortified cities.
 - a. They saw everything the other ten spies had seen. But they chose to disregard the obstacles in favor of trusting the word of the Lord.
- d. Their report started out great but then they lost their focus. When it comes to matter of faith, too often we shift our focus and lose sight of God. We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."
 - i. *Grasshoppers! God's chosen people see themselves as Grasshoppers.* When things looked tough it was not faith that prevailed, but fear. They became pessimists, pointing out the problems, instead of having faith and looking at the possibilities, the potential. Those with faith challenge and motivate and point to the possibilities, but those who have no faith criticize and focus on the problems. When it comes to the Christian life, **Giants and grasshoppers are not determined by genes, but by faith.**
 - ii. Did you see the "but" that the spies reported?

1. That simple conjunction is a bridge to fear. Where ever there is a “but” in a statement, it means the speaker is about to cancel out all that he has said before.
2. Whenever we say “but” as a part of our statement, we are talking about a “reservation” we have. The word “but has a nullifying action to faith.
3. “Oh I believe God can do it, but...”
4. “That would be a great goal, but...”
5. Do you see the damper, the cold water that the word “BUT” throws on the fire of faith and optimism?
6. Maybe you are a person who says “but...” a lot. I found that I am when I am given a task. I found out why too! I was always given the task of building the road for someone’s vision. And in the process of planning that road, I could see the hazards, the problems and the challenges. I used to say “but” a lot. It is hard to change when you tend to see the “barriers” quickly. I would have to say that a person who says “but” a lot might be near sighted. We see the obstacles up close but don’t always look at the far away picture or goal.
- 7.

2. Facing it with Faith:

- a. Numbers 14:6 *“Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, “The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. “If the LORD is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us--a land which flows with milk and honey. “Only do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them.”*
- b. I have never been in a church that doesn't have its problems. I have never met a person who doesn't have his / her problems, myself included.
 - i. But we need to be careful how we handle problems. We need to handle them with faith.
 - ii. For the Isrealites, I would say that giants in the land are a legitimate concern.
 - iii. But their focus became a magnification of the problem instead of searching for a solution.
 - iv. Likewise, our church will be facing challenges in 2003. We will grow. We will experience discomfort in that growth. We will have to do things we have NEVER done before. We will be sharing roles with others. It will be uncomfortable at times.
 1. In the middle of that, you and I must focus on God and not on our problem. We must focus upon the solutions rather than dwelling on our difficulties.
 - 2.
- c. Did you know that the pessimism of the ten men and their lack of faith was devastating.

- i. Imagine the scene.
- ii. We read in (Numbers 1:46) that a census taken at Sinai several weeks earlier that recorded that the number of men over 20 years of age able to fight was 603,550. Add the women and those under 20 years of age and you are looking at close to 2 million people. By nightfall their report has spread throughout the people, and with it the infectious fear of spies. "That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud" (Numbers 14:1). Women were sobbing that their husbands would be killed in battle and their children left fatherless. Across the camp that night you could hear the sound of weeping and anguish. By the next morning everyone was grumbling against Moses and ready to go back to slavery. They were ready to give up.
- iii. If you have come to a point in your life when your lack of faith has you focusing on problems instead of the provider; if you are having that grasshopper mentality, you might best keep it to yourself and among leadership until you are willing to focus on God's provision and God's promises.
 - 1. You may do inestimatable damage to the people of God because you've lost your faith.
 - 2. As a result of your grasshopper mentality, you may doom the rest of God's people to wander in a spiritual desert for next 40 years!
 - 3. Write this in your heart!
 - a. If you come to a place where you feel the desire to resist, fight or run, it is because you are uncomfortable with a change.
 - b. It is here that you must examine your focus and ask who are you looking at? Are you looking out for "yourself"? (what makes you comfortable) ...Or are you looking out for God's plan?
 - c.
- d. Caleb's Response: He measured the giants, not against themselves, but against God.
 - i. To a great God those giants were very puny. The next day, Caleb and Joshua try to sway the gathered Israelite crowds with their faith: "*The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them*" (14:7-9).
 - ii. There is no disagreement in the facts only the conclusion.
 - iii. Caleb and Joshua stand for truth even in face of threatened stoning. Their's is an unpopular minority report. Surely they knew the opinion of the others as they had discussed this around the campfire.
 - iv. Here Caleb is surely a leader-- about thirty-eight years ahead of the rest of his tribe.
 - v. Caleb is positive. An optimist if you will. 10 said it couldn't be done.

- vi. A negative spirit can kill faith in the weak quicker than anything else. But it couldn't kill it in Caleb. He inspired others-- even if only Joshua and Moses it was a lofty thing.
 - vii. Resisted the peer pressure.
 - viii. But if we measure God to the task we will never be disappointed. **Faith focus on God's Abilities, not our own.**
 - ix. Ask yourself these questions: Am I content to do the minimum in my service to God? Am I content to sit back and watch others work? Am I looking for the easy way out in my Christian service? Or am I asking God to give me his toughest! Give me the mountain! **God USE me!**
3. **Caleb's reward:** Deuteronomy 1: 35 *'Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore to give your fathers, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and to his sons I will give the land on which he has set foot, because he has followed the LORD fully.'*"
4. **And Caleb finishes:** Joshua 14:6-15 *"Then the sons of Judah drew near to Joshua in Gilgal, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know the word which the LORD spoke to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh-barnea. "I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought word back to him as {it was} in my heart. "Nevertheless my brethren who went up with me made the heart of the people melt with fear; but I followed the LORD my God fully. "So Moses swore on that day, saying, 'Surely the land on which your foot has trodden will be an inheritance to you and to your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God fully.' "Now behold, the LORD has let me live, just as He spoke, these forty-five years, from the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, when Israel walked in the wilderness; and now behold, I am eighty-five years old today. "I am still as strong today as I was in the day Moses sent me; as my strength was then, so my strength is now, for war and for going out and coming in. "Now then, give me this MOUNTAIN (hill) country about which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day that Anakim {were} there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the LORD will be with me, and I will drive them out as the LORD has spoken." So Joshua blessed him and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. Therefore, Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite until this day, because he followed the LORD God of Israel fully. Now the name of Hebron was formerly Kiriath-arba; ^{E158} {for Arba} was the greatest man among the Anakim. Then the land had rest from war. "*
- a. I still can't get over Caleb's optimism: Here he is, 85 years old, he believes he is still as strong as he was 40 years before; he doesn't want to retire in the valley, he chooses another mountain to climb. He chooses the tough climate, the hard road, the challenges, and the land that still has giants in it.
 - i. How many of you feel you could climb a mountain at 85? 75? 60? Why give up because the government says you are "retired" at age 65? Most of us will have 20 more years of vibrant life left after retirement. Why spend it in the valley? Why not on the mountain, making a difference?

- b. The last notice we have of Caleb is when (being then eighty-five years of age) he came to Joshua at the camp at Gilgal, after the people had gained possession of the land, and reminded him of the promise Moses had made to him, by virtue of which he claimed a certain portion of the land of Kirjath-arba as his inheritance
 - c. Five times the scriptures say that he wholly followed the Lord
 - i. After conquering the land it is divided by God in the casting of lots. Caleb makes a request-- not just for his own good. At 85 he makes the longest speech of his life—at least the longest recorded speech. It is eloquent. (See Jos. 14:6-14) The selection of his land went counter to the division of the land by lots. He obtained land in the middle of Judah!
 - 1. We are always rewarded by God. II Tim. 1:12 God keeps His promises.
 - a. Caleb was given strength to do what God wanted Him to do. *That reward is often more responsibility. Even more difficult tasks.*
 - 2. Problems are opportunities in their work clothes.
 - 3. He was forty at the time of spying, 85 at the time of driving fierce Anakim from Hebron--later to be the place at which David was crowned king. Only he and Joshua were so old.
 - 4. He was able to accomplish all this because his heart was wholly given to God and he wholly followed God
 - ii. How do we enter old age? As Caleb with good memories and willingness to take on a new challenge. We are all older than we were and find each day we draw more heavily upon life's experiences for reflection.
 - 1. What have we stored up.
 - 2. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow lost his first wife when they were in Holland together. His second wife died in a fire in their home. When he was an old man, someone once asked him, "How can you continue to write so beautifully and remain so vigorous?" Longfellow just pointed to an apple tree that was blossoming and said, "That apple tree grows a little new wood every year, and from the new wood the blossoms come. I guess," he said, "like the apple tree, I like to grow a little new wood every year."
5. Some would consider these events miraculous.
- a. But they are merely the result of a man being fit and ready for service when the need arises.
 - b. Caleb was a success because he kept himself ready and on the lookout for ways to serve God.
 - c. Are you? When the server is ready the service appears.
 - d. Last week I shared with you that 2003 holds unknowns. Will you duck and cover when the trials strike or will you serve others? Will you be ready? Will you be fit and ready for service when the need arises?
6. **Two people can observe the same data but come to entirely different conclusions. Twelve spies went into the Promised Land.** They saw the same countryside, the same cities, the same inhabitants,

the same roads, the same produce, the same cattle. The data was identical but the reports were diametrically different. Why?

- a. And why is it that two Christians can look at the same world, and one sees a vast number who are poverty-stricken, lazy, immoral, ungodly, hateful (and there are plenty to see), while the other sees a vast number who need Christ? The data are identical, but the two individuals see polar opposites. Why?
- b. **REASON: What we "see" is determined, not by our eyes, but by our perspective.** Two people can look at the same yard. One sees the beautiful colors of the leaves on the tree; the other sees all the leaves on the lawn that need to be raked. Two people can watch it rain. One sees the dust being settled and the ground soaking up desperately needed moisture; the other sees clouds and mud. Two people can face the same challenge. One sees an opportunity; the other sees a roadblock.

c. .

7. I would like to tell you a modern day parable. It is about 2 mice named "Sniff" and "Scurry", and two little tiny people named "Hem" and "Haw." They all lived in a maze. They would get up each morning to look for cheese, and would travel through the difficult passageways of the maze in search for their next meal. One day, they discovered a huge piece of cheese in the maze. So much, it seemed as if it would be enough to last forever. The 2 little mice would get up each day and jog to their cheese pile and eat their fill. The two little people, Hem and Haw, at first would wake early and raced to the cheese to get their fill. But over time, the two little people, hem and haw began to get up later and later, they became comfortable and happy that they had their food, they had their security, and stopped exploring the maze. They had no idea how the cheese got there and just assumed it would always be there. Before long, they moved their homes closer to it, because it had become "their cheese", they built their lives around this cheese storehouse. But over time, Hem and Haw became so comfortable that they didn't notice what was happening. Sniff and Scurry, on the other hand, each day would sniff and scurry about the maze and the cheese, paying attention to the changes that occurred there each day.

- a. One morning, they arrived there and there was no cheese! It was gone! Sniff and Scurry took it to heart and realized that something had changed. So, they ventured out into the maze and looked for more!
- b. When Hem and Haw arrived, they were shocked! "What no cheese? Who moved my cheese?" they shouted. Hem turned red and screamed at the top of his lungs, "its not fair."
- c. Hem was yelling, while Haw was perplexed. Cheese was important to their life. It meant feeling safe, having a family, maybe retiring next to Cheddar Lane someday. Now it was gone. And all they could think about was searching the corner where it had been and wondering where it had gone. So while Sniff and Scurry had quickly moved on, Hem and Haw continued to Hem and Haw.

- d. The next day, Hem and Haw left their home and returned to the place where the cheese had been. Haw shut his eyes and put his hands over his ears. He didn't want to know that the cheese had been gradually getting smaller. He believed it had all of the sudden moved.
- e. Haw noted, "The mice have moved on, do you think we ought to to?" Hem answered, "why should we! We are little people. Things like this just don't happen to us!"
- f. All during this time, Sniff and Scurry are searching with vigor, and find another batch of cheese way up in the maze. They found what they were looking for. The biggest store of cheese they had ever seen.
- g. Meanwhile, Hem and Haw are still evaluating their situation. They are suffering the effects of no cheese. They are getting frustrated. They were blaming each other for the loss of the cheese. Finally, Haw envisioned the two mice looking and finding cheese. He stands up and says, "Lets Go!"
 - i. But Hem responds..."NO. I like it here. Its comfortable. Besides, its dangerous out there. "
 - ii. Haw replies, "no it isn't dangerous, we used to spend lots of time out there looking for cheese.
But Hem answers, "Im getting too old for that. I'm not interested in making a fool of myself or getting lost." At that, Haw's enthusiasm for moving on melted. He returned with Hem to their home and each day, they walked back to where the cheese had once been. They tried cutting holes in the walls just in case someone had hidden it. They tried "waiting" to see if someone would put the cheese back. But the cheese never reappeared.
 - iii. One day, Haw says, "Look at us. We are doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. Isn't that the definition of INSANITY?" If this wasn't so ridiculous, it would be funny. While he didn't like the idea of getting lost in the maze, he had no choice, so he put on his running shoes, and got ready to go.
 - iv. Hem argued with him, "What if there is no cheese out there? What if you don't find it?"
 - v. Haw shrugged and said, "Hem, sometimes things change and they are never the same again. This looks like one of those times. Life moves on and so should we"
 - vi. As He left the familiar area, he asked himself, "Why didn't I get up and move sooner?" He know that Hem would be still asking himself the question, "Who moved my cheese?"
- h. Over the next few days, Haw found a little cheese here and there. He got lost a lot. His progress was slow. But it wasn't as bad as he had feared it would be. And when he got tired or discouraged, he reminded himself that no matter what, it was better than staying in the cheeseless situation he had been in with Hem.
- i. Haw also reflected on the things that had happened. He got honest with himself and realized that the cheese hadn't really disappeared overnight, but had gradually gotten smaller and older

over time It had even begun to taste bad. He realized that change wouldn't have hurt so much if he had been anticipating it.

- j. Finally, he found a bit a cheese which was enough for a full meal for him and Hem. So he backtracked all the way to Hem, to take him a share of the cheese and to invite him to come along on the journey. When he got back to Hem, he was hurt by his reply.
 - i. I don't want that "new cheese." Its not what I am used to. I want my OWN cheese back. I am not going to change until I get what I want.
 - ii. 'Haw, was disappointed, but continued his journey. He was beginning to understand that change was a part of life and that to refuse to be open to it was to spell doom for himself. At last, he found the cheese and there was Sniff and Scurry..
 - iii. Haw discovered that he had to admit that the biggest barrier to change was within himself. Nothing gets better until you change.

8. **SIGNIFICANCE: Perspective can impact our lives tremendously.** I know people who are constantly living in a pit of despair, depression, and guilt, not because their problems are any worse than anyone else's(though certainly they think they are), but rather because they have developed a habit of looking at everything through a negative perspective. I know people who are desperately lonely, not because they have been rejected by other people but because they have such a negative perspective of themselves that they project the same into every relationship. I know professing Christians who have completely bombed out spiritually and have no sense of intimacy with God whatever, not because *God* has abandoned them but because *they* opted for a selfish perspective on life that allows no room for God or His revealed will.
9. On the other hand, I know people, in this church, who have gone through very deep waters but have emerged trusting God and rejoicing in his goodness. I know others who pick my spirits up every time I see them because of a big smile, a hearty hug, and a genuine love for people. I know still others who walk close with God, seeking His face, serving Him faithfully, and demonstrating a spirit of generosity to everyone around them. In the search for reasons as to why the first group are so different from the second, one can look in vain at such areas as heredity, environment, personality, temperament, circumstances, family, etc. Invariably one comes back to the issue of perspective—they have either accepted God's perspective or they have borrowed one from the world.
- 10.

What do I want you to do?

1. In a few moments, we will be taking of the Lord's Supper, which is an act of worship and remembrance of what our Savior did for us. It is a very spiritually intimate time, and is often called communion, because we draw near to Jesus during its celebration.
 - a. The scriptures tell us that before we celebrate the Lord's Supper that we should take inventory of our spiritual status, of our relationship with God, and examine ourselves, lest we bring judgement upon ourselves.

Give me this Mountain

- b. I believe that you and I need to examine ourselves to see if we have a heart of openness to God, or whether our hearts have grown closed to God's leadership and love. If during today's sermon, you have recognized your own stiff-necked attitude concerning faith and obedience to God's direction, then I invite you to repent and receive God's forgiveness.
 - i. Maybe you have been settling for mediocrity, or you have sought your own comfort over the call of God to an intense and dedicated life to Christ.
 - ii. I invite you to turn from that today. Come forward to these kneeling rails or come up here for me to pray with you.
 - iii. Maybe you have not yet responded to God's invitation to become His child. He has been calling your name, He has been inviting you to become a Christian. Won't you respond to Him today? Come forward and I will pray with you during our time of invitation.
 - iv. Let us pray.

Lord's Supper:

The Lord's Supper we are about to celebrate is for anyone who is a Christian. If you have received Christ as your savior, you can participate. *You don't have to be a member of our church – we have "open communion" here.*