



June 1-2 2013

Numbers 13

"Courage like Caleb"

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In the past few messages Pastor Gary has emphasized the fact that the Israelites were first-class complainers. God's reaction to their grumbling and complaining is remarkable, especially when you consider his promise to give them a land of their own.¹ This was the land God swore on oath to give to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There are more than 85 times in the Old Testament that God spoke about the land he promised to Abraham, and 20 times God spoke about the land as *"flowing with milk and honey."* There's no doubt God was giving them his best!

Having left Egypt some 15 months earlier and having travelled some 400 miles in and around the Sinai Peninsula, they are finally on the border of the Promised Land of Israel. It would be natural for us to think they would be celebrating with dancing and singing, but that wasn't the case. They were about the business of complaining and whining like spoiled children. They must have been out of their minds! It's hard to imagine that anyone would go along with the idea that it's better to die as a slave than to live free.

All of the tragic details are found in [Numbers 14:1-4](#), which says: *"That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, 'If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?' And they said to each other, 'We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.'"*

¹ [Numbers 13:1-2](#) - *"The Lord said to Moses, 'Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites...'"*

What got them so stirred up, and caused them to be fearful and faithless? The answer is they believed the bad report given by ten of the twelve spies. They seem to have no understanding of the fact that everyone receives news that upsets, overwhelms, or causes one to be fearful, but life is not about the absence of bad news; it's about how we deal with it.

Historical Background

1. God called Moses to choose 12 men, one from each of the 12 Tribes of Israel, to embark on a reconnaissance mission to get the “lay of the land.”
2. The 12 spies spent 40 days checking out the size of the armies, the size and number of cities, towns, and villages, as well as the fruitfulness of the land.
3. [Numbers 13:26–27](#) – *“They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. 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.’ ”*
4. In [Numbers 13:23](#), we read about the spies and their experience in the Valley of Eschol, when they cut off a single cluster of grapes that was so large they had to put it on a pole that was carried between two men!²
5. The second part of the report the spies gave did not give the people a lot of joy and happiness.
 - a. [Numbers 13:28](#) – *“But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there.”*
 - b. [Numbers 13:31–33](#) – *“But the men who had gone up with him said, ‘We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.’ And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, ‘The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim³ there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.’ ”*
6. Caleb brought a distinctively different report!

² It's believed that each grape was the size of a plum!

³ The Nephilim were a giant race of people, who first appear in Genesis 6. Goliath was a part of the giant race. He was 9'9" tall, according to [1 Samuel 17:4](#). [Deuteronomy 3:11](#) mentions another giant, Og, the king of Bashan, whose bed was 13.5ft. long and 6ft. wide!

- a. **Numbers 13:30** - *“Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, ‘We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.’ ”*
7. Caleb was one of the rare people we come across in life, in that he was a “can do” person.
- a. In other words, Caleb was saying, “We can do this, giants or no giants, because God is on our side!”
 - b. **Philippians 4:11-13** - *“... I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”*
8. All of the people who made the choice to believe the bad report would die in the desert, because their grumbling against God had reached a fatal limit.
- a. God is patient to a point, and he is *“slow to anger, abounding in love,”*⁴ but we can’t treat God with contempt forever.
 - b. **Numbers 14:26-35** gives the account of the next 38 ½ years, in which an average of 200 people died every day, until the entire generation, except Caleb and Joshua, died in the desert.
 - i. **Numbers 14:24** - *“But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it.”*
 - c. God’s mercy is seen in this account, in that he didn’t wipe them out all at once; he allowed them to slowly die a natural death without ever seeing all he had in store for them.
 - d. God’s mercy was extended to the children of all of those who chose not to believe God.
 - e. God’s eternal rewards are for those who believe and receive or who are too young to be accountable.

Caleb Knew God Was Bigger Than The Obstacles He Faced

9. There were real giants in the land and there were real battles that had to be fought.
10. We are not supposed to embrace the notion that we’re to pretend there aren’t any problems in the life of a Christ-follower, because that’s false faith that says, “I will confess my way out of my difficulties.”

⁴ **Numbers 14:18**

11. It is true that God could have killed all of the giants with a word or some other action that didn't require the Israelites to lift a finger, but he chose to...
 - a. Comfort them in the midst of their conflicts.
 - b. Counsel them on how to deal with their conflicts.
 - c. Guide them through their conflicts.
 - d. Provide for them in the midst of their conflicts.
 - e. Empower and enable them to overcome.
 - f. Promise that he would never leave nor forsake them.

Caleb Was Willing To Stand Alone For What He Believed

12. We need to be reminded about the fact that the majority is not always right, and, in fact, in the Exodus account, the majority was never right!
13. It takes courage and conviction to stand alone, especially when everyone else is standing together.
14. Anyone can run with the crowd, but only those who are strong in the Lord can stand alone when necessary.
15. **Isaiah 7:9b** - *"If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all."*

Caleb Followed God Wholeheartedly

16. Caleb was different from everyone else because he followed God with all of his heart.
17. **Psalms 86:11-12** - *"Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever."*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Numbers 13:1-16, 21-33** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Do you think your family and friends would say you're a "can do" or a "can't do" person?

4. Do you think your family and friends would say you have a different spirit and you're "wholeheartedly following the Lord?"
5. Have there been times in your life when you were fearful and lacked faith in the Lord to help you in difficult circumstances?
6. Have there been times when you've gone along with the crowd, only to find you were heading away from God's best?
7. Spend time talking about the ways the Lord comforts, counsels, guides, provides for, empowers and enables people to overcome and win the victory.
8. Have you, like the Israelites, believed a bad report that prevented you from seeing/experiencing God's blessing in your life?
9. When you face difficulties in life, do you pray like this?
 - a. "Lord, when times get tough and news is discouraging, don't let me be fearful or faithless, but give me a different spirit like Caleb, so I can face the challenges in my life."
10. Read and discuss [Philippians 4:11-13](#).
11. Read and discuss [Isaiah 7:9b](#).
 - a. Allow the people in your group to spend time talking about times when they've made a stand for the Lord that cost them something.
12. Read and discuss [Psalm 86:11-12](#).
13. Allow the people in your group to share experiences they've had in which God helped them overcome incredible obstacles and challenges.
14. How have the "Caleb, can do, God-believers" you know influenced your life?
15. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: give thanks for the Lord's ministry of comfort, counsel, guidance, provision, empowering in every situation; commit to stand for biblical truth, no matter what the cost may be; (have someone ready to read [Psalm 86:11-12](#)) pray the Scripture.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).