

Sunday, December 31, 2023

Moving Forward in Faith and Focus

Acts 26: 19 & 20 (ESV)

“Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,²⁰ but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

When we fail to focus on priorities:

1. Indecision

James 1: 8 (ESV)

he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

2. Division

Proverbs 28: 2 (ESV)

When a land transgresses, it has many rulers, but with a man of understanding and knowledge, its stability will long continue.

3. Collision

1 Timothy 1: 19 (NLT)

Cling to your faith in Christ, and keep your conscience clear. For some people have deliberately violated their consciences; as a result, their faith has been shipwrecked.

Numbers 13: 17 – 20 (NLT)

Moses gave the men these instructions as he sent them out to explore the land: “Go north through the Negev into the hill country.¹⁸ See what the land is like, and find out whether the people living there are strong or weak, few or many.¹⁹ See what kind of land they live in. Is it good or bad? Do their towns have walls, or are they unprotected like open camps?²⁰ Is the soil fertile or poor? Are there many trees? Do your best to bring back samples of the crops you see.” (It happened to be the season for harvesting the first ripe grapes.)

Numbers 13: 21 – 23 (NLT)

²¹ So they went up and explored the land from the wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, near Lebo-hamath. ²² Going north, they passed through the Negev and arrived at Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmi—all descendants of Anak—lived. (The ancient town of Hebron was founded seven years before the Egyptian city of Zoan.) ²³ When they came to the valley of Eshcol, they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes so large that it took two of them to carry it

on a pole between them! They also brought back samples of the pomegranates and figs.

Numbers 13: 25 & 26 (NLT)

After exploring the land for forty days, the men returned ²⁶ to Moses, Aaron, and the whole community of Israel at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran. They reported to the whole community what they had seen and showed them the fruit they had taken from the land.

The problem of moving forward in fear:

1. Focus is on the negatives.

Numbers 13: 27 & 28 (NLT)

This was their report to Moses: “We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country — a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces. ²⁸ But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak!

2. Focus is on others.

Numbers 13: 29 (NLT)

The Amalekites live in the Negev, and the Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the hill country. The Canaanites live along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and along the Jordan Valley.”

3. I lose focus on my God-given abilities.

Numbers 13: 31 (NLT)

But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. “We can’t go up against them! They are stronger than we are!”

Numbers 13: 32 & 33 (NLT)

So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites: “The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge. ³³ We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that’s what they thought, too!”

4. I drag down those around me.

Numbers 13: 32 (NLT)

So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites...

Isaiah 8 :12 (NLT)

Don’t call everything a conspiracy, like they do, and don’t live in dread of what frightens them.

5. Fear breeds misery.

Numbers 14: 1 - 4 (NLT)

Then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. ² Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron.

“If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!” they complained. ³ “Why is the LORD taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder! Wouldn’t it be better for us to return to Egypt?” ⁴ Then they plotted among themselves, “Let’s choose a new leader and go back to Egypt!”

Solution?

Strengthen your Faith and Sharpen your Focus

Numbers 13: 30 (NLT)

But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses.

“Let’s go at once to take the land,” he said. “We can certainly conquer it!”

Numbers 14: 6 - 9 (NLT)

Two of the men who had explored the land, Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, tore their clothing. ⁷ They said to all the people of Israel, “The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land! ⁸ And if the LORD is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. ⁹ Do not rebel against the LORD, and don’t be afraid of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, but the LORD is with us! Don’t be afraid of them!”