

Big Q's?

Part 7: Dealing with Doubt... Believing God for the Impossible August 22, 2010

Have you ever asked God, “What are you doing”? You find yourself in a situation where you are trying to figure out, what He is trying to teach you. You are doing your best to ask “what” not “why”, but it just doesn’t seem to be working? Do you really believe God can do anything? Is He big enough to handle your problems, concerns, and fears? Do you sometimes feel God wouldn’t understand and if He did, He wouldn’t care?

Transition: Today we want to look at the Dragon of Doubt. Let’s be honest! We can act like we don’t have them (doubts), but we do! Our doubts cause us to fear the future, worry about the “what if’s, and test our resolve to really trust God, no matter what.

Many of us can relate to an O.T. story from Numbers 13-14. Many of you are new to our church. You have come since I became the pastor in March 2008. Others of you have been at this journey for over 5 years. You are like the “kids” born in the desert asking why are walking in circles dad? For some of you, you feel like you have been in the desert. Though painful, desert experiences are essential if we really want to stretch our faith and trust God for the impossible. I believe these are exciting times and we are about to enter the promise land. Let me tell you a story...Tell the Story of the Spies!

Proposition: How do we overcome doubt when facing a seemingly impossible situation?

I. **Our Focus...on Our Problems** (Symptoms of faithlessness)

This is what happens when we focus on our human efforts or our own power, instead of God’s. Look at the context here.

It is late July or early August. The grapes in the vineyard are ripe and it is a beautiful time of the year. The spies go from Zin

(in the south) to Hamath (in the North). They go all over the land...looking, searching and taking it all in. Israel waited 40 days for them to return.

13:22 Hebron. The first major city the spies came to in Canaan.

- Abram had earlier built an altar to the Lord here (cf. Gen. 13:18).
- Abraham and Isaac were buried here (Gen. 49:31).
- The city became the inheritance of Caleb (Josh. 14:13–15)
- David’s capital when he reigned over Judah (2 Sam. 2:1–4).

A. We focus on the **negative** instead of the positive (13:27-29)

27 Thus they told him, and said, "We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. 28" Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there.

1. They don’t deny that the land is all that God said it would be (v.27), they just can’t get past the “giants” that they also saw.
2. They made the fatal mistake of comparing and became paralyzed with fear.
 - They saw the Pitfalls vs. the power
 - The foes instead of the fruit
 - The giants instead of the grapes!
 - Obstacle vs. Opportunity
3. When we are negative, it is easy to “feel” overwhelmed. They feel surrounded on every side! (v.29)

29 "Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan."

4. As a church it is easy to get overwhelmed. What are the giants we are facing?
 - Only a trickle a new members; founders moving on. Who will replace them? Making our budget
 - Hiring new staff

- Getting into a facility
- Unanswered prayers for family, or job situation.
Does God really care?

5. Only two of the spies wanted to take the land, but only Caleb is mentioned initially (v.30)

³⁰Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it."

- Caleb: "one who attacks"
- Joshua "whose help is Jehovah"; the Lord is salvation.

6. When we focus on the obstacle, we miss the opportunity right before our very eyes. Someone has said, "We are all faced with a series of great opportunities, brilliantly described as impossible situations."

B. Our **perspective** becomes distorted (13:31-32)

*³¹But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us." ³²So they gave out to the sons of Israel a **bad report** of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that **devours** its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are **men of great size**."*

1. We exaggerate and blow things out of proportion

- **13:32 a bad report.** The report of the 10 spies was evil because it exaggerated the dangers of the people in the Land, sought to stir up and instill fear in the people of Israel and, most importantly, it expressed their faithless attitude toward God and His promises.
- "*devours/ eat us up*"; like grasshoppers. It may have been a reminder of the plague in Egypt in Exodus. They are saying there are a lot of them (v. 33).
- **13:33 Men of great size/giants.** This term was used in Gen. 6:4 for a group of strong men who lived on the earth before the Flood. The descendants of Anak were, in exaggeration, compared to these giants, which led the spies to view themselves as grasshoppers before them.

Cf. 13:28. They were noted for their height (Deut. 2:21; 9:2).

2. We let our imaginations run wild and move from objectivity to subjectivity. They had neglected one very important fact... God had already given them the land! They didn't trust. They didn't have to conquer! They already possessed it!

C. We grumble and **complain** about God's appointed leaders (14:1-4)

¹Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. ²All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! ³"Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" ⁴So they said to one another, "Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt."

1. They are ready to abandon their God given dream. Ready to cash in and retreat, before they even face their first battle! 3 v. 4 "Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt". They are about to mutiny.
2. 14:27: In actuality, their complaining was against not just against their human leadership, but God himself.
3. App: I want to commend our church for how they have handled adversity here at church. Losing the founding pastor, going over a year in your search, staying focused on the goal. Way to go.
4. Imagine how Moses and Aaron felt. No telling what these crazy people will do! They had to lead people who
 - Disrespected them
 - Didn't appreciate them
 - Discouraged them
5. Look at their response. They defended them and begged them reconsider and trust God.

D. God's provision in the past is **discounted** and forgotten (14:9-11)

⁹"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."¹⁰But all the congregation said to stone them with stones Then the glory of the LORD appeared in the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel. ¹¹The LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?"

1. v.11 in spite of all the miracles. How quickly we forget! What about leaving Egypt? The ten plagues! God was on their side.

2. Nothing is impossible with God!

¹⁷'Ah Lord GOD! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You, (Jer. 32:17)

▪ strongest Heb. Negative; lit. "No absolutely nothing".

3. They had lost perspective. They doubted their God given capabilities. How about us? Have you lost perspective, just because some people have left the church, or we are not in a building yet?

4. **Testimony of God's Faithfulness: Eric and Jen Ford's move to Thailand.**

II. God's Focus...on **His Power** (Solutions for faith)

A. **DECIDE** who is Lord of your life.

1. Is it you or Him?

2. Revival begins in the hearts of men and women who have Jesus Christ firmly on the throne of their lives.

3. The 10 spies made a conscious decision to reject God's deliverance.

4. What needs to change in your life so God can use you?

- Sin: I confess_____.
- Submission: I surrender_____.

B. **OPERATE** by faith not feelings.

1. Doubt is like driving a car in reverse...you can't go very fast (lose speed) and you lose perspective (hard to drive in a straight line. You are always looking backwards.
2. Faith is going against the majority and willing to stand alone (ex. 2 vs. 10).
3. *Having peace or certainty about direction doesn't automatically mean it's where God is leading, and uncertainty doesn't mean He's NOT leading us.*
4. Fear is the kissing cousin of doubt. What fear keeps you from trusting God completely?
 - Fear: Focusing on the problems instead of the potential.
 - Do you live with God in a box?

C. **UNDERSTAND** God wants what is best for you.

1. *Rom. 8:28 "All things work together for good";* not just some things!
2. What is best for our Church?
3. We need to stay focused on our mission of making disciples. This includes evangelism and equipping. It is not and either or choice. It is about teaching and reaching! I it is helping people who are far from God, find their way back to Him!

D. **BELIEVE** God for the impossible.

1. *14:17 "But I pray now let the power of the lord be great, just as Thou hast declared.*
2. What do you want God to do in your life? What is it that God can only do through you?
3. *Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God."* God expects us to take risks, but that doesn't mean he wants us to take foolish risks. We need His guidance to

know the difference between faith and foolishness!

Example: Next year's budget!

4. What dreams do you have for our Church? I will share my dream on Sept. 12.

E. **TRUST** Him for the future.

1. He has been faithful. He won't let us fall or fail.
2. **Following through as a leader in the midst of difficult circumstances is about how big God is, not about how good our backup plan is. Matt Chambers**
3. What impossible situation do you want God to handle? Rebellious kids, a broken marriage, a failed business, a divided church, a habitual sin, a constant frustration?

III. Our Response: PRAY 21...21 days of prayer and fasting for our church. What to pray for?

Perseverance:

⁵Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, ⁶so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom15:5-6

1. Ask God to give you the ability to "hang" in there. Don't give up. God is going to do it...whatever it is. This is our time to see God work.
2. **Paderewski Story: Are you going to get up or give up?**

Revival and renewal:

1. Revivals happen when His people pray for them. We need God to show up! We need both a personal and corporate awakening. Why not here in Moorpark?
2. **Psalm 119** instructs us on what to ask God for and how He will do it. Revive us ...
 - According to His Word (v. 25, 88)
 - In His ways (v. 37)

- Through His righteousness (v.40)
 - According to His Loving Kindness (v. 88, 159)
 - According to His Ordinances (v. 149,156)
3. We will talk more about this Tuesday night.

Awareness of God's presence

1. We need to ask God to show us where he is at work so we can join him. Experiencing God by Henry Blackabee
2. Ask Him to open doors that have been closed to you.
3. Practice the presence of God literally. What would Jesus Do? Every decision.
4. Look for evidence of God at work and tell others about Him.
5. Note: God's presence..
 - Was promised to Moses and the people. (Ex. 33:14)
 - David sought God's presence during a 3 year famine (II Sam. 21:1)
 - We know we can't hide from His presence. (Psalm 139:7)

Yield to the Holy Spirit's power

1. You don't need any more of Him, He needs more of you.
2. Eph. 5:18. I am praying for your filling, empowering and usefulness to God as you are yielded.
3. Acts 1:8 says we have that kind of power.

Table Talk

1. Read the rest of Numbers 14. Look at the consequences of Israel's disobedience. What lessons can we learn?
2. What is God revealing to you about His character or yours? Are you in alignment with Him?

John Erwin ... Sr. Pastor ... Moorpark Evangelical Free Church