

Stay Focused on the Goal  
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Numbers 32

Opening video: Me Church

Sometimes my personal plans and agenda can get in the way of being obedient to God's plans and mission.

But, we all need to remember: It's not just about me and mine, it's about fulfilling God's mission.

Here's the GOOD NEWS: We CAN do BOTH, if we approach it right!

The question is:

How do we deal with the tension when our own personal agenda and desires CONFLICTS with God's plans? We'll revisit that question in a few moments.

Set the scene...

- Moses and the children of Israel have been wandering around in the wilderness for 40 years and they are about to cross over and fulfill God's plan to CONQUER Canaan.
- Remember: This is the PROMISED LAND that was WEST of the Jordan
- But this was WAR...God was going to use the Israelites to exact JUDGEMENT on the sinful people in Canaan. And the LAND would be THEIRS! But, the children of Israel wouldn't just ROLL IN and set up housekeeping. It was going to be a BIG FIGHT.
- Just before it's time to press ahead, TWO OF THE 12 TRIBES come to Moses and the high priests of all the tribes with a PERSONAL AGENDA.

Numbers 32:1

The Transjordan Tribes

1 The Reubenites and Gadites, who had very large herds and flocks, saw that the lands of Jazer and Gilead were suitable for livestock.

- The Reubenites and the Gadites (and later half of the tribe of Manasseh) looked around and said...this land where we're sitting ain't too bad! In fact, for livestock, it's PERFECT.
- We're talking THE BIG VALLEY...(for you 60's TV fans).
- Who needs the land of Canaan? We've already got THE PONDEROSA!
- So they come to Moses and say:

Numbers 32:5-8

5 If we have found favor in your eyes," they said, "let this land be given to your servants as our possession. Do not make us cross the Jordan."

- "We'll just take this land right here as our promised inheritance. We don't want to leave!"
- Can you imagine Moses' reaction? What do you think it was?
- Moses got "ticked"! He said, "You have got to be kidding me!" After all this, we get ready to cross over...I won't even get to go with you because I MESSED UP..."

6 Moses said to the Gadites and Reubenites, "Shall your countrymen go to war while you sit here? 7 Why do you discourage the Israelites from going over into the land the LORD has given them? 8 This is what your fathers did when I sent them from Kadesh Barnea to look over the land.

- Moses had seen this movie before and it didn't end well.
- "This is what your fathers did..." What is Moses referring to? Why had they been wandering around an extra 40 years?

Numbers 32:9-15

New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

9 After they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and viewed the land, they discouraged the Israelites from entering the land the LORD had given them. 10 The LORD's anger was aroused that day and he swore this oath: 11 'Because they have not followed me wholeheartedly, not one of the men twenty years old or more who came up out of Egypt will see the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob— 12 not one except Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua son of Nun, for they followed the LORD wholeheartedly.' 13 The LORD's anger burned against Israel and he made them wander in the desert forty years, until the whole generation of those who had done evil in his sight was gone.

14 "And here you are, a brood of sinners, standing in the place of your fathers and making the LORD even more angry with Israel. 15 If you turn away from following him, he will again leave all this people in the desert, and you will be the cause of their destruction."

- Moses is TICKED!
- So how does this apply to you and me, today?
- It's not just about me, and mine...It's about helping others too.
- Individual members have an obligation to support the mission and goals of the church.
- You might say, "What I do won't affect the outcome either way so I'll just do my own thing. It won't matter what I do I'm just one person."
- Question: Were you ever in a group where one malcontent brought everyone down?
- How does that happen? How is it that one malcontent can affect the work of the group?
- One person's failure to obey God can influence others to follow suit. (Verse 7)
- Flip side: One person's courageous obedience can inspire others to step out in faith and obey God also.

- You and I have to ask ourselves is there an area of my life where my personal agenda may be preventing me from fully supporting goals or ministries at church?
- These two tribes said...wait a minute Moses! You've got us all wrong...

Numbers 32:16-18

16 Then they came up to him and said, "We would like to build pens here for our livestock and cities for our women and children. 17 But we are ready to arm ourselves and go ahead of the Israelites until we have brought them to their place. Meanwhile our women and children will live in fortified cities, for protection from the inhabitants of the land. 18 We will not return to our homes until every Israelite has received his inheritance.

- Moses, you've jumped to a conclusion, we'll STILL FULFILL OUR OBLIGATION
- Just let us GET OUR FAMILIES AND FLOCKS AND HERDS SECURE and then let us COME BACK.
- Quick lesson for LEADERS and FOLLOWERS: Moses JUMPED TO A QUICK CONCLUSION because THEY HADN'T COMMUNICATED WELL.
- Leaders and followers need to take a breath and make sure we're clear.

Without a doubt, God expects His people to care for and to nurture our families

1 Tim. 5:8 ... Paul writes:

8 If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

We've gotta take care of our family, but there's a tension. In Luke 14:26 Jesus said:

Luke 14:26

26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.

- Question: How do you balance the God-given charge to serve others with the God-given responsibility to care for family members? Any thoughts?

at the start of a New Year we need to consider:

What opportunities do you and I have in 2012 to support other church members or goals of our church? How can we do that and still achieve your own goals?

Numbers 32:20-24

20 Then Moses said to them, "If you will do this—if you will arm yourselves before the LORD for battle, 21 and if all of you will go armed over the Jordan before the LORD until he has driven his enemies out before him— 22 then when the land is subdued before the LORD, you may return and be free from your obligation to the LORD and to Israel. And this land will be your possession before the LORD.

23 "But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out. 24 Build cities for your women and children, and pens for your flocks, but do what you have promised."

- "Be sure your sins will find you out."
- How many heard that from their Mommas and Daddies?
- Usually we think of that line as applying to some terrible HIDDEN SIN: Murder, Theft, etc. "I'm glad I don't have a terrible HIDDEN SIN that will come to light when I RUN FOR PRESIDENT!"

Charles Spurgeon said...that's not what Moses was talking about. Spurgeon said: *If you take the text as it stands, there is nothing in it about murder, or theft, or anything of the kind. In fact, it is not about what men do, but it is about what men do not do. The iniquity of doing nothing is a sin which is not so often spoken of as it should be. A sin of omission is clearly aimed at in this warning, — "If ye will not do so, be sure your sin will find you out."*

Sometimes we forget that NOT DOING WHAT WE'RE SUPPOSED TO DO is ALSO a sin, just like doing something bad. Sins of OMISSION.

Let's wrap up with a little discussion...

- Back to our first question: How do we deal with the tension when our own personal agenda and desires CONFLICT with God's plans?
- We have some very busy people in this class who do a whole lot of ministry and juggle work and family. Would you open up and share? How do you do it?
- How do you balance being a part of God's work and your own personal responsibilities?
- When you're confronted with the conflict of MINISTRY vs PERSONAL agenda, what's a good first step? PRAYER.
- I don't think God is "The Riddler". I don't think he tries to trick us about what He wants us to do. He may not reveal it all at once...but if we are PRAYERFUL and SINCERE, I just (based on my own experience) think He will make it clear what He wants us to do FOR HIM.
- What else do you consider when balancing MINISTRY and PERSONAL PLANS?
- Here's one: Is God calling me or man? Another: Is THIS my spiritual gift?
- By the way, I get the reality that sometimes the church "burns out" its best people.
- Sometimes you have to say "no". If you've prayed about it sincerely and it's no...say no.
- BUT, be careful if you are ALWAYS SAYING NO.
- Sometimes what we have to say is "I can't do THIS, but I feel I CAN do THIS OTHER THING."

So What's The Takeaway?

Bottom line: We all have personal agendas and plans. And God DESIRES that we take care of our FAMILIES. But, we STILL have to make sure we're FOCUSED on doing our part in His WORK! If we approach it sincerely and prayerfully we CAN do both!