

The Land
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Allen Power

Numbers 13:17-31

We don't do thrill rides! [Illustration: We thought it was a harmless Ferris wheel.]

When God calls us to a new task or a new season, we often imagine it will be like a day at the beach; then we learn we must fight to take the beach. We thought it would be a walk in the park, then we had to climb a mountain. We thought doing His will would be smooth sailing, but on the way there were rough waters. We thought doing God's will would be like riding a harmless Ferris wheel and it turned out to be a thrill ride!

Before they left Mt. Sinai, God had told the Children of Israel they would have to fight to claim the Promised Land and His angel would go before them (Exodus 23:23). However, when it came time to go into the land of promise their fears derailed their faith in God's promises. Their anxiety began to overtake their obedience.

The point: When God clearly commands us to do His will, there will be challenges to confront and obstacles to overcome. If it His will, He will enable us to face the "giants" standing in our way. We must trust Him with obedient faith in the face of our fears.

1 The Lord now said to Moses, **2** "Send out men to explore the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to the Israelites. Send one leader from each of the twelve ancestral tribes." **3** So Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He sent out twelve men, all tribal leaders of Israel, from their camp in the wilderness of Paran. **17** 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.)

- Deuteronomy chapter one (v. 20–23) tells us the idea of sending spies to check out the Promised Land came from the Israelites and God simply permitted it.
- It's good to plan before a new chapter; when can planning become a problem?
- Some investigation and pre-planning before we take on God's assignment isn't a bad thing. In fact, scripture recommends it (Luke 14:28-31, Proverbs 16:3, Proverbs 15:22, Proverbs 21:5, Proverbs 6:6-8). The problem arises when planning turns into stalling out of fear or failure to trust and obey.

21 So they went up and explored the land from the wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob, near Lebo-hamath. **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.

25 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. **27** 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! **29** 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.” **30** 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!” **31** 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!” **32** 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!”

- This was the fearful majority versus the faith-filled minority.
- The ten doubtful spies were “yes, but” people. *“Yes, it IS a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey” BUT, there are GIANTS!!”*
- In a democratic society and in a Baptist church we like going with majority rule!
- Why was majority rule a problem in this specific case?
- 250 years ago, a significant portion of the colonial population feared breaking away from England, while a vocal minority pushed for declaring independence. If the majority had ruled, we would likely not be a free nation today!
- When God directs, we should act in faith and not be discouraged or deterred by a majority opinion rooted in fear or lack of trust in God's power and promises.
- Another example: Sometimes God has made His will for us clear and well-meaning friends and family try to talk us out of it because of fears on our behalf.
- That can be a difficult situation. How can we deal with it?
- Look at verse thirty: *“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!’* How could Caleb be so confident when the others were so scared?
- We might say, *“God gave the Israelites specific instructions, how can I be sure I’m hearing His assignment correctly?”*
- There is no simple formula for confirming God’s will but here are some steps:
 - Surrender your desires and stay in scripture.
 - Continually pray for wisdom and listen for the Holy Spirit's guidance.
 - Seek confirmation through wise counsel from mature Christians and by paying attention to your circumstances, such as open and closed doors.
 - Finally, act in faith, trusting that an inner sense of peace can be a strong confirmation of God's leading.
- *“Okay, let’s say I’m clear on God’s direction, but what about those ‘GIANTS?’”*
- When the GIANTS are what we imagine might happen, NAME the giants!
 - **Acknowledge** the fear by giving it a name.

- **Verbalize** it to God in prayer.
- **Replace** the fear with a specific biblical promise about God's faithfulness.
- What about REAL GIANTS; confronting real obstacles in doing God's will?
- Sometimes the giants are people, sometimes circumstances, but they are always the enemy (Satan) trying to scare us away from trusting God's promises.
- When the giants are real we should do what those ten doubtful spies should have done – watch “Veggie Tales!” Remember the little song? *“God is bigger than the Boogie Man, He's bigger than Godzilla or the monsters on TV. God is bigger than the Boogie Man and He's watching over you and me. So when I get scared, I'll think of Him and close my eyes and smile.”*
- When a person, a group, or a situation feels like a giant in the way of doing God's assignment we need to ask ourselves, *“Who is more powerful, them or God?”*
- Sometimes the obstacles might be a sign God is “re-routing” our journey.
- When obstacles arise, ask the Lord, *“Should I course-correct or stand firm?”*
- Go back to the steps above about seeking His clear will. Those same steps apply when circumstances and obstacles cause a need for updated guidance.
- Sometimes those giants are scary. How can I have the confidence of Caleb?
- The Life Application Bible: *“Imagine standing before a crowd and loudly voicing an unpopular opinion! Caleb was willing to take the unpopular stand to do as God had commanded. To be effective when you go against the crowd, you must: (1) have the facts (Caleb had seen the land himself); (2) have the right attitude (Caleb trusted God's promise to give Israel the land); (3) state clearly what you believe (Caleb said, “We are well able to overcome it”).”*ⁱ
- Caleb (and Joshua) remembered what the other ten spies forgot. God said this land was PROMISED. God repeatedly told their ancestors and them His promise to give them the land no matter the obstacles.ⁱⁱ Caleb and Joshua believed that!
- Their experience at the Red Sea should have given these people confidence. **Exodus 14:13–14 (NLT)** — **13** But Moses told the people, “Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch the Lord rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again. **14** The Lord himself will fight for you. Just stay calm.”
- So, what happened? Did everyone rise to Caleb's call to move into the land or were they too frozen in fear and not faith? That's next week's lesson in Numbers 14.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- When God calls us to a new task or a new season, we often imagine it will be like a stroll through peaceful gardens, but there will be GIANTS! Accept that!
- Last Sunday's 9:30 service was powerful! Singing that song, “Through the Fire” was another reminder of Jesus' words in **John 16:33 (NLT)** — **33** *I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”*
- When God clearly commands us to do His will, there will be challenges to confront and obstacles to overcome. If it is truly His will, He will enable us to face the “giants” that are standing in our way.
- We must trust Him with obedient faith in the face of our fears.

ⁱ Tyndale. NKJV Life Application Study Bible, Second Edition . Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱ Genesis 13:15 — "All the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever."

Genesis 15:18 — God makes a covenant with Abram defining the land from the river of Egypt to Euphrates.

Genesis 17:8 — God promises Abraham "all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession."

Genesis 26:3-4 — God confirms the land promise to Isaac, Abraham's son.

Genesis 28:13 — God promises Jacob the land as an inheritance for his offspring.

Genesis 35:9, 11-12 — God reaffirms the land promise to Jacob.

Genesis 48:3-4 — Jacob speaks of God's promise to give the land to his descendants.

Genesis 50:24 — Joseph refers to God's promise to bring the Israelites to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.