

Finishing Well

Lesson #7

The Valley Of Eshcol: Valley Of Decision March 2, 2022

The valley is a time of great potential for growth as God uses it to shape and reshape us for His purposes. There is also a response for us to make in allowing Him to continue bringing the work that He has begun in us towards completion.

God had rescued the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt and had led them to Mt. Sinai where He revealed His purpose.

Ex. 19:3-6 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

⁴ Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. ⁵ Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

⁶ And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.

In the Old and New Testaments, God promised to bless His faithful followers and bring them into His rest. [Israel = literal physical land; Church = spiritual abundant life]

Canaan is a picture of the inheritance God has planned for each of His children today, the work He wants us to do, and the places He wants us to occupy.

Eph. 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Faith and faithfulness are the conditions of entering the promised land [Hebrews 11:9].

1. God required Israel to trust and obey him.
2. God demanded faithful worship of Him [Deut. 7:12-15].

Deut. 6:14-15 Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and His anger will burn against you, and He will destroy you from the face of the earth.

Background: The Promised Land was an endowment from Earth's Creator to a specific people group, the children of Israel, in which they established their nation.

Deut. 6:23 And He brought us out from thence, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore unto our fathers.

- God's promise was Israel's title deed to the land as well as His guarantee that they would defeat their enemies.
- Israel would acquire the Promised Land through God's guidance and His miraculous intervention in history [Exodus 33:14-16; Psalm 44:1-8; 136:10-22].

God's promise was all Israel needed, but the nation doubted God's Word and began to walk by sight instead of by faith. They took their first wavering step of doubt when they asked Moses to let them search out the land before the entire nation went in to engage the enemy in battle.

Deut.1:20-24 And I [Moses] said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the LORD our God doth give unto us.

²¹ Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.

²² And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come. ²⁴And they turned and went up into the mountain, and came unto the Valley of Eshcol and searched it out.

Consider: Perhaps God permitted this search to reveal what was in their hearts.

Truth: They needed to learn to trust the Word of God and do the will of God His way and not their own way [Prov. 3:5-6]

Moses led the Israelites to the door of the Promised Land at Kadesh-Barnea. [in Desert of Zin]

- Place of combat: Abram fought and experienced a great victory over the Amalekites at Kadesh. [Gen. 14:7]
- While camped at Kadesh, the Israelites failed to believe God would give them victory in acquiring the Promised Land. [Deut. 9:23]

Two significant events occurred at Kadesh Barnea.

1. The Israelites' faithless refusal to possess the Promised Land Num. 13:32-33
2. Their opposition to Moses at not having enough water Num. 20:2-5

Note: These two events, marked by unbelief, grumbling, and disobedience, directly affected Moses, Aaron, and the Israelites.

The valley of Eshcol takes center stage on one of the Old Testaments saddest days.

The Task Num.13:1-3; 17-20

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ² Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.

²⁰And be ye of good courage and bring of the fruit of the land.

The 12 spies traveled about 500 miles during the forty days of their survey of Canaan, but they discovered nothing that God hadn't already told them!

- They already knew the names of the pagan nations that lived in the land. Gen. 15:18-21
- They knew it was a good, rich land flowing with milk and honey. Ex. 8:8, 17 17
- And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs. Num. 13:23
- They visited Hebron, where the patriarchs of Israel were buried with their wives.
 - Num. 13:22; Gen. 23:2, 19; 49:29-31; 50:13

Did the reminder of the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, encourage their own trust in God? For ten of the spies, the answer is no.

Num. 13:25 And they returned from searching of the land after 40 days.

- 146x in Bible- 40 generally symbolizes a period of testing, trial or probation.

Show N Tell Num. 13:26-33

They brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. We came unto the land whither thou sent us, and surely it flows with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. It is like God said. It is a good land!

Negative Report from the 10 Spies

- It is a good land that flows with milk and honey, BUT...usually a sign of unbelief.
- There are giants, large, fortified cities and all the "ites" who are powerful live there.
- Their conclusion: "We will be soundly defeated" [Num. 13:31-33].

Paralyzed by fear, they only see danger and defeat.

Positive Report from 2 Spies

Num. 13:30 "Caleb quieted the people in the presence of Moses and said,

"Let's go up at once and take possession of the land because we are well able to overcome it!"

- They saw victory, saw milk and honey, grapes, pomegranates and figs.
- They were characterized by courage and confidence in the God of promise.

Be encouraged. God's promise will be fulfilled. You will see what He said.

Let your FAITH roar so loud that you cannot hear what doubt is saying.

Num. 13:31-33 But the men that went up with him said, We are not able to go up against the people; And they brought up an evil report of the land...

Peterson Simbotwe: Any report that creates hopelessness, fear and causes people to doubt the authenticity of the already spoken word of God, is an evil report.

And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eats up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.

And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants:

and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

- It is impossible to acquire this land.

Question: Did they go to the same places and see the same things? YES!

They all had the same instructions from Moses. They all came from the same ethnic background and culture. They all had the same experiences and history.

Why the difference in attitude and outlook? Their Confidence In God

Note the words of the 10: Num. 13:27, 32

Ten spies identified Canaan as "the land to which you sent us" and "the land through which we have gone," but not as "the land the Lord our God is giving us." Because these ten men were walking by sight, they didn't really believe God's promises. They looked at the people of the land and saw giants; they looked at the Canaanite cities and saw high walls and locked gates; and they looked at themselves and saw grasshoppers.

If only they had looked by faith to God, they would have seen the One who was able to conquer every enemy and who sees the nations of the world as grasshoppers (Isa. 40:22).

Num. 13:31 "We are not able" is the cry of unbelief.

- "Our God is able" is the affirmation of faith. [Dan. 3:17; Phil. 4:13]

What John Gardner said about the political arena can be applied to the spiritual arena and the Christian's walk of faith: "We are continually faced with a series of great opportunities brilliantly disguised as insoluble problems."

Wiersbe: A faith that can't be tested can't be trusted, and God tests our faith to help us make sure it's genuine and to help make it grow. [I Pet. 1:1-9]

Tozer: "Faith comes first to the hearing ear, not to the cogitating mind."

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" [Rom. 10:17].

Many Christians have the assurance of salvation; they know the Christian doctrines; they know about the abundant life, but they are overwhelmed with dangers, problems, and the possibility of defeat - i.e. the giants of the Christian life.

- Their eyes are on the obstacles, not on God.

Wiersbe: "Unbelief always sees the obstacles... Faith always sees the opportunities."

Refusal to enter the land = type of the believer's refusal to claim his blessings in Christ.

- Instead of trusting Him, doubting Christians are filled with fear.
- Instead of believing His promises, they are overcome by problems.

Doubt had turned into unbelief, and unbelief is rebellion against God. [Num. 14:9; Heb. 3:16-19]

The People's Reaction: A night of complete discouragement followed. Num. 14:1-4

- open rebellion against God 14:1-3
- proposal to elect a new leader 14:4
- the cry to return to Egypt 14:4

Discouragement is a very powerful tool of Satan. It attacks all ages, destroys thousands, robs Christians of their joy and makes mountains out of molehills.

Discouragement causes all kinds of side effects - bitterness; anger; depression etc.

The Causes Of Discouragement Num. 13:26-33

1. Dependence on men, not God.
 - God said He was giving the land of Canaan to them. Num. 13:2
 - They listened to and put their trust in the report of 10 men and not God.

Whose voice will I listen to? The voice of God, which gives courage and leads to victory, or the voice of the people, which instills fear and leads to failure?

2. Heeding the bad news & not the good

4 pieces of bad news > All have to do with size and strength

- a) Strength of their army. "The people living in the land are strong...stronger than we are."
 - The implication? "We are too weak."
- b) Size of their cities. "The cities are large and fortified."
 - The implication? "We can't penetrate them or overcome them."

c) Ferocious cannibals "The land we passed through to explore is one that devours its inhabitants

- The implication? "They'll eat us alive."

d) Size and strength of the men. "We also saw the descendants of Anak there... All the people we saw in it are men of great size. We even saw the Nephilim there—the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim! [13:28b, 32b, 33]

- The implication? "We are puny, small, like grasshoppers in comparison."

3 Pieces of Good News:

a) The land was rich and nourishing. "It is flowing with milk and honey" [13:27].

- The implication? "What God had said was true. "

b) They could take the land. "Let's go up now and take possession of the land because we can certainly conquer it!" [13:30].

- The implication? "God is able to give us victory in spite of what things look like."

c) Their diet would change. "They cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes, which was carried on a pole by two men. They also took some pomegranates and figs" [13:23]

- The implication? "We will have a wonderful diet after only having quails and manna for so long. This land is plentiful, full of sweetness and nourishment.

3. Responding with fear, not courage.

Moses said: "Be courageous" [Num. 13:20]. But fear gripped their hearts.

They had to make a choice - "fight or flight." Courage said: "Fight." Fear said: "Flight."

Elijah was faced with the same choice.

I Kings 17-19: God had answered his prayers and the rain stopped.

- God fed him by ravens bringing him bread and meat.
- He had performed miracles by the power of God.
- The widow's barrel of flour and jar of oil never ran out.
- He had raised the widow's son from the dead.
- He had called fire down from heaven to consume the water-soaked sacrifice

But when Jezebel threatened his life, fear struck his heart [I Kings 19:1-4].

- Discouragement set in and he wanted to die. He thought he was the only one left who served God [I Kings 19:10]. But God still had 7000 who were faithful to Him.

Factors that seem to generate discouragement: Self-pity and loneliness

Often, discouragement comes right at the time of a spiritual high. It doesn't back off because we read our Bible and pray. It may worsen as Satan ramps up his attack to harass us when we are discouraged - he takes full advantage of our moments of weakness.

4. Walking by sight, not faith. They saw the walled cities, the giants, and the cannibals.

They weighed their options and decided that the cards were stacked against them.

Things were not the way they had first appeared or how they expected.

Truth: Living by sight puts the burden on you but living by faith rolls the burden onto God.

The Characteristics Of Discouragement Num. 14:1-10

1. Weeping.

14:1 Then the whole congregation broke into loud cries, and the people wept that night.

- Behind them was the wilderness, in front of them the walled cities and giants.
- They felt trapped, hopeless and they wept from despair.

Unbelievers are "without hope and without God in the world" [Eph. 2:12]. Nowhere to turn.

Believers:

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| ➤ Do not grieve like the rest, who have no hope. | I Thess. 4:13 |
| ➤ Boast in the hope of the glory of God | Rom. 5:2 |
| ➤ trust in the God of hope | Rom. 15:13 |
| ➤ have hope in Christ | I Cor. 15:19 |
| ➤ have the hope of salvation | I Thess. 5:8 |
| ➤ rejoice in the hope of eternal life | Titus 1:2; 3:7 |
| ➤ Waiting for "the blessed hope" | Titus 2:13 |

Spurgeon: My faith rests not in what I am, or shall be, or feel or know, but in what Christ is, what He has done and in what He is doing for me.

2. Complaining. "All the Israelites complained about Moses and Aaron" Num. 14:2

Complaining had become their way of life in the wilderness.

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| ➤ They grumbled about being thirsty and God gave them water. | Ex. 15:24; 17:3 |
| ➤ They grumbled about being hungry and God gave them manna. | Ex. 16:2 |
| ➤ Then they grumbled about the manna and God gave them quails. | Num. 11:4-6 |
| ➤ They grumbled that God had brought them out to die and repeatedly God protected them, delivered them, provided for them. | Deut. 1:27 |

Num. 14:2b If only we had died in the land of Egypt, or if only we had died in this wilderness!

Eve's heart-problem was a secret complaint. Her underlying attitude seems to have been a secret grumble as evidenced in her misquote of what God said: "You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die" [Gen. 3:3]. Her secret grumble soon got out of control. Urged on by Satan she said in her heart: "Why shouldn't we eat of this tree anyway. God isn't the good God we thought. He's depriving us of a benefit that is rightly ours." This is how easily a secret complaint can become outright rebellion and then blame: "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" [Gen. 3:13].

3. Blaming.

Num. 14:3 "Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to die by the sword? Our wives and children will become plunder." Blame is the core of most negative emotions. It is the reason why we get angry, jealous, envious. We don't want to take responsibility for our own actions. Blame is holding someone else responsible for hurting us, depriving us of something, cheating us. Blame never affirms but criticizes. Never builds up; it destroys. Never defends; but attacks. Never forgets; but remembers. Never forgives; but accuses. Never restores; but wounds. Never smiles; but frowns. Never solves; but complicates. Never unites; but separates.

Weeping, complaining, blaming all led to...

4. Rebellion. "So they said to one another, 'Let's appoint a leader and go back to Egypt'" [Num. 14:4]. God and Moses are now out of the picture.

The Israelites never judged their rebellious spirit even after this experience.

Eventually, they provoked Moses, causing him to lash out in anger against them - "Listen, you rebels!" [Num. 20:10] - as a result of which he was barred from entering the promised land. Rebellion reveals underlying attitudes like insubordination, disobedience, distrust, anger, cynicism.

Num. 14:5-9 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. ⁶ And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes:

⁷ And they spoke unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which flows with milk and honey.

⁹ Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defense is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.

Weeping, complaining, blaming, rebellion. Then...

5. Murder. "The whole community threatened to stone them" [14:10].

What began as mild irritation progressed to indignation, to wrath, fury, and to uncontrolled rage. When fully expressed, anger produces murder.

Matt. 15:19 "From the heart come evil thoughts, murders..."

The Consequences Of Discouragement Numbers 14:22-45

Consequences for uncontrolled fleshly activity, for unabated discouragement.

1. Forfeiting God's blessings. The Israelites were barred from the land and wandered 38 years. They missed out on God's blessings - the very best that God had in store for them. They didn't even know it. They never experienced it! What a tragedy of epic proportions!

2. God's discipline that leads to death. Numbers 14:36-37

The 10 spies died because they complained against Moses and caused the people to sin.

God chastises his children as a faithful Father - "Whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son..." [Heb 12:6]. Sometimes, God's discipline ends in death - e.g. if Christians do not judge their own sinful behavior [I Cor. 11:30].

3. Disobedience that leads to defeat Numbers 14:25, 39-45

They mourned bitterly. Chastened by the death of the 10 spies, the people now tried to go into the land in their own strength. Moses warned them: God will not be with you, but they did not listen. Their confidence was in themselves, not God.

- Result: They suffered enormous defeat by the Amalekites.

Lessons from the Valley of Eshcol

#1 Fear Freezes out Faith

Giving into fear has consequences. This generation lost their opportunity to enter the land. Fear had won the day. The future of the Israelites was on ice for 38 years because of fear. Phil. 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

#2 No Need To Fear

Worry and fear will do nothing to help our situation.

Obedient response: Faith in the One who made me, loves me and sent His Son to die for me.

Joshua 1:6, 9 Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Have I not commanded you?

Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

#3 The Antidote For Discouragement Is Courage Numbers 14:6-9

Joshua & Caleb were motivated by courage - brave, fearless, unswerving in their faith in God.

II Tim. 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and sound mind.

#4 Winning The Battle Over Spiritual Giants Isn't Won With A Sword.

Eph. 6:16 It's won with the "shield of faith" which preserves me from enemy attacks, keeps me free from fear, protects me from the shouts of threats, gives me confidence in the midst of battle - Confidence in God.

#5 God Keeps His Promises

Some years later before his death Joshua reflected on all that He had seen God do:

Josh. 21:45 Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; everything came to pass.

Josh. 23:14 Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you will know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good promises which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; they ALL have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed.

The Valley of Eshcol, located inside the Promised Land, proved to be a Valley Of Decision.

Will I take God at His Word?

Do I See Giants or God's Grace?

Will I Stay Faithful in A Hard Place?

Will my testimony be: She was so close, yet so far?

Failure To Believe: In the desert of wandering, the Israelites experienced plagues, death, and testing. At Kadesh-Barnea, on the border of Canaan, the people of Israel foolishly forfeited their opportunity to enter the Promised Land and claim their inheritance. It would prove to be one of the biggest mistakes God's people ever made.

This tragic failure has made the name "Kadesh" a synonym for defeat and lost opportunity.

➤ It is a dangerous thing to trifle with the will of God.

May we not follow the unbelief of those who did not trust God to fulfill His promises.

When times of testing come, may we display the faith that Joshua and Caleb had in trusting God at Kadesh Barnea.