

of Discipleship

Day 1: Numbers 13:17-20

Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, 'Go up there into the Negeb, and go up into the hill country, and see what the land is like, and whether the people who live in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, and whether the land they live in is good or bad, and whether the towns that they live in are un walled or fortified, and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it or not. Be bold, and bring some of the fruit of the land.' Now it was the season of the first ripe grapes

This whole event is the explanation of why the children of Israel spent an extra twenty years in the wilderness. Moses has representatives from each of the tribes go on this recon mission. They are to explore and bring back information on the conditions in the Promised Land.

Question: If they spent an extra 20 years in the wilderness then how long in total did they spend?

Challenge: Get a map of the ancient world and see if you can trace the route of the spies on their recon mission.

Scripture: Numbers 13:1-24

Day 2: Numbers 13:25-28

At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the Israelites in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; they brought back word to them and to the entire congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, 'We came to the land to which you sent us; it flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. Yet the people who live in the land are strong, and the towns are fortified and very large; and besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there.

The exploration's goal was to verify for the rest of the people that the land was good, not to assess the people and their ability to ward off invasion. They were to see with their own eyes the salvation of God. Their freedom from Egypt was only the beginning of their salvation, the completion was to enter the land. They were, with their own eyes, to acknowledge God's gift to them and report back to the rest of the people. There was not a river of milk and honey. The phrase 'milk and honey' is used to say the land is a good place for livestock (mostly sheep and goats) and that there is plenty of vegetation because of the bees who do the pollination.

Question: Can you find out who or what the Anak were?

Challenge: The people weren't prepared for change. What would you have done to help prepare them to listen to the report and trust that God would not let them go into danger without help?

Scripture: Numbers 13:25-14:10

Day 3: Numbers 13:30-31

But Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, 'Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.' Then the men who had gone up with him said, 'We are not able to go up against this people, for they are stronger than we are.'

Caleb was singled out from the rest of the spies because he followed Moses instructions (really God's instructions) to report on how good the new land would be for them to live on. The others looked at the size of the people, not the size of the fruit. The others saw the problems but Caleb just saw the glory of God revealed in the fruitfulness of the land.

Question: How did Caleb find the strength to talk to the crowd about going ahead when his fellow spies gave a negative report?

Challenge: What has helped you in the past to overcome your doubts about God's plan for your good?

Scripture: Numbers 14:11-25

Day 4: Numbers 14:1-2

Then the entire congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. And all the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron; 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!

Once again the fear of the unknown causes the people to respond to the negative report of the elders with an outlandish claim - let us die in Egypt or the wilderness but not here. The people are at fault for not listening to Caleb but the leaders have let the people down in a big way. This is consistent with the concerns of the prophets. They were speaking directly to those in leadership when they talked about the injustice and phony worship that took place in both Judah and Israel.

Question: Think about how the complaint was actually made. Was it a petition, a demonstration, a sit in, or what?

Challenge: When have you been so distressed that you have asked God, "why me?"

Scripture: Numbers 14:26-45

Day 5: Numbers 14:3-4

Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become booty; would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?' So they said to one another, 'Let us choose a captain, and go back to Egypt.'

The back to Egypt committee is in full swing. Before we heap blame on the people let us recall how we may have treated God. The back to Egypt committee comes when there is too much attention paid to complaints instead of prayer. Too many people treat God like someone running for office. They ask, "What have you done for me lately?"

Question: How bad do you think the report about the people in the land was to cause such worry about being totally destroyed?

Challenge: When have you seen "the back to Egypt committee" in action? Have you ever been a part of it?

Scripture: Deuteronomy 1:19-45

Day 6: Numbers 14:22-23

none of the people who have seen my glory and the signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have tested me these ten times and have not obeyed my voice, shall see the land that I swore to give to their ancestors; none of those who despised me shall see it.

God does not destroy the people but the consequence for their unbelief is to wander for twenty more years. The people are not ready to accept God's gift of salvation. The writer in Hebrews is correct when he said that "today is the day of salvation, do not harden your hearts" (Hebrews 4:7). God will continue to lead but this current generation will not be going into the land.

Question: What do you think this verse means to us in the 21st century?

Challenge: Can you think of some of the ten times of testing God is referring to?

Scripture: Exodus 14:10-14, 16:2-4, 17:1-1-7, 32:1-14