

God Plans Good

HOW CAN WE HAVE FAITH DESPITE OPPOSITION?

Focal Verses • NUMBERS 14:1–10

Aim for Change

EVALUATE the reasons for the Israelites' refusal to listen to Joshua and Caleb, DESIRE deeper trust in the promises of God, and CONFRONT the future in confidence of God's guidance and provision.

In Focus

Michelle was the only one professing faith in Christ within her family. She had grown up learning to be kind, but when a friend at school invited her to youth group, she heard the true Gospel for the first time. Michelle realized just being kind was not enough; she repented of her sins and accepted salvation that night.

When she was old enough to live on her own, Michelle wanted her faith to be seen in all of her life. But her family didn't understand. Often, she came up against persecution from family members because she would not join in their parties and trips to casinos to gamble. Many of the family members encouraged her to join them and have some fun. Occasionally, two of her cousins would tease her about her faith keeping her from having a good time with the family. A few even wanted to start an argument by saying things which they thought would cause Michelle to respond in negative ways. She did not argue with them. She simply quietly lived out her faith.

However, Michelle looked forward to the gatherings at church with other Christians. She found encouragement and strength from her church family to continue to work out her salvation as she walked daily with God.

Our behavior is often a powerful witness to others. How is Michelle sharing her witness?

SCAN FOR VIDEO



Keep in Mind

"If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it to us; a land which floweth with milk and honey" (Numbers 14:8, KJV).

Focal Verses

KJV Numbers 14:1 And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night.

2 And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!

3 And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?

4 And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.

5 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 spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.

8 If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it to us; a land which floweth 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 defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.

10 But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

The People, Places, and Times

Promised Land. The land of Canaan is a hill country east of the Mediterranean Sea and west of the Jordan River. God promised Abraham that this land would be given to his descendants (Genesis 13:14–17). The Israelites occupied the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua, fighting such people as the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. The land was described as “flowing with milk and honey,” indicating that it would provide the Israelites with an abundant lifestyle.

Caleb. This spy was from the tribe of Judah, which was associated with royalty, as it produced King David and Jesus. Only he and Joshua stood as a voice of courage when the twelve spies returned from the Promised Land (v. 24), saying they could take the land. God promised to allow him to enter the Promised

Land for his faithfulness. Therefore, when it came time to take the land a generation later, Caleb led his clan to conquer the portion of land allotted to him. He defeated some of the most formidable opponents of Canaan, the giant sons of Anak (Joshua 15:13–15).

Background

Numbers 13 and 14 record the Israelites’ journey in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. While in the wilderness, God commands Moses to send one man, the leader of their ancestral tribe, to spy on the Canaan land (Numbers 13). Shammua goes from the tribe of Reuben, Shaphat from Simeon, Caleb from Judah, Igal from Issachar, Joshua (Moses changed his name from Hoshea) from Ephraim, Palti from Benjamin, Gaddiel from Zebulun, Gaddi from Manasseh, Ammiel from Dan, Sethur from Asher, Nahbi

from Naphtali, and Geuel from Gad. The men were to determine the land's quality and the people's strength.

After the men return from spying on the land, they declare that Canaan is full of good things, but the people seem too strong to overcome. As they listed their objections to entering the land, only Caleb (13:30) and Joshua (14:6-9) disagreed with their report. Caleb and Joshua believed they could prevail over the enemies in the land of Canaan. However, the negative report persuaded the Israelites, and they lamented that they had not remained in Egypt. The Israelites decided to choose another leader who could help them return to Egypt and stone their current leaders. But the glory of the Lord appeared and interrupted their plans.

The Israelites are tired of wandering and can now enter the land God had given them. Why are they reluctant to claim what God has promised them?

At-A-Glance

1. The People Speak Out in Rebellion (Numbers 14:1-4)
2. Joshua and Caleb Speak (vv. 5-10)

In Depth

1. The People Speak Out in Rebellion (Numbers 14:1-4)

After the 12 spies gave their reports about Canaan, the Israelites did not want to enter the promised land. The Israelites responded with mutiny and rebellion against God. Ten spies said they should not enter, while two spies encouraged them to receive God's blessings for their nation. The people listened to the ten spies, who justified their desire to return to Egypt. Their response was a rebellion against God's instructions. The people complained and

murmured against God and Moses. They "wept all night" (Numbers 14:1).

As they imagined their desperate condition, the people fretted, which gave credit to the negative report of the ten spies instead of God's promises. Because they feared they would be dying soon, they wished they were already dead. The previous months of good living, due to God's protection, were dismissed as the Israelites wished they had died in Egypt.

The Israelites looked forward with despair, without realizing that God did not save them from Pharaoh to die at the hands of the Canaanites. The Israelites responded to God's good plans with an audacity that God led them into a snare of death and destruction.

Why do people complain through criticizing and grumbling?

2. Joshua & Caleb Speak (vv. 5-10)

Through the loud cries of the Israelites, Moses and Aaron humbly prayed to God. As the people's complaints continued to incite clamor and rebellion, Moses prayed that the people would not ruin themselves.

In response to the sins of the people and in dread of the wrath of God, which was ready to befall them, Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes (v. 6). They assured the angry Israelites of the blessings in the land they surveyed. As the majority had reported, the land would not engulf them because Israel had God on their side. But, the Israelites did not confront their fear of entering the land that awaited them. If the Israelites had confronted their fears, they would have realized that their disbelief was a sin, and they had provoked God to leave them (v.12). The Israelites needed faith to enter the Promised Land. Joshua and Caleb saw the abundance of the land. It was a "good land" (v. 8) and worth entering. However, due to the Israelite's lack of trust in God, they couldn't receive the fullness of God's promises.

Joshua and Caleb were distressed by the Israelite's lack of faith and desire to return to Egypt. The Israelites were not in danger from the Canaanites, but they were in danger from their God because they rebelled against Him. Joshua and Caleb encouraged the Israelites to trust that God would bring them into the Promised Land. The Israelites responded in anger and distrust of God's leaders, who desired to give them good counsel. The complaints led to an enraged multitude who desired to stone God's servants. The Israelites were not reasonable, and their anger was out of control.

Consider your relationship with God. Do you complain when something terrible happens or blame someone else? Do you pray to God in response to challenges?

Search the Scriptures

1. Why did the Israelites cry (Numbers 14:1)?
2. What did the Israelites believe would happen to them in the unfamiliar land (v. 3)?
3. In their despair and rebellion, what do the Israelites conspire to do (v. 4)?
4. Why did Joshua and Caleb believe they should enter the land (v. 8)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. The Israelites' experience of what happened in the past made them want to derail their future, although God already promised them victory. Most of the assembly wanted to return to Egypt, but two factors stopped them—God's presence and His chosen leadership. Describe God's presence in this Scripture. What difference does Moses' leadership make in this story?

2. The Israelites were so fearful that they longed to return to Egypt, where they labored as slaves (Numbers 14:1–2). Why were they afraid of the future even though God promised them victory?

Liberating Lesson

God has called the church to enter our lands and be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world. Despite that call, many churches remain silent on issues like violence against women and children, the plight of refugee and migrant families, and environmental concerns. While we often justify our silence by arguing that churches are spiritual, not political spaces, Jesus taught us that the first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all our hearts, souls, and minds. The second commandment is to love our neighbors as ourselves. God has promised never to forsake us. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:20) records that Jesus is with us until the end of the age. God has already promised us the victory! So, why are we so afraid to speak up and help those who are suffering?

Application for Activation

Use a poster board to display God's blessings and promises for His children or postcards to inspire you to trust God's Word. Include God's response when we complain and murmur. Refer to Philippians 2:12–18, which instructs believers to avoid murmuring and complaining. Place the board and postcards in a place you see every day to begin your day focused on God's blessings and promises.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Sources:

Life Application Study Bible (New International Version). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1991.

Packer, J. I., Merrill C. Tenney, and William White. *Nelson's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Bible Facts*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995.

Unger, Merrill F. *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. Edited by R.K. Harrison. Chicago: Moody Press, 1988.

Say It Correctly

Tabernacle. taa-BUHR-naa-kuhl.

Daily Bible Readings

DAY 22

Exodus 13–15

Psalms 11

DAY 23

Exodus 16–18

Psalms 12:1–3

DAY 24

Exodus 19–21

Psalms 12:4–8

DAY 25

Exodus 22–24

Psalms 13

DAY 26

Exodus 25–26

Psalms 14

DAY 27

Exodus 27–29

Psalms 15

DAY 28

Exodus 30–31

Psalms 16

Notes
