

Fears of Great Size

Numbers 13-14

Introduction:

Lads to Leaders is a program designed to build godly families, teaching them to be responsible to God, the church, and society.

Since 1968, Lads to Leaders has been educating and training families to be servant leaders.

Mentors and role models provide direction and affirmation as students receive instruction and encouragement for doing good.

At a pivotal point in Israel's national history, twelve leaders were selected for an important mission.

Ten of the leaders lead the people from fear.

Two of the leaders lead the people from faith.

Fears of great size can keep even leaders from doing with confidence what God has equipped them to do.

I. Calling for Leaders

God led Israel out of Egypt with His great power and mighty hand.

God provided dry ground for them to cross the Red Sea.

God gave them the law, but they fell into disobedience with the golden calf.

God instructed them to build the tabernacle, a place where He would dwell with them.

God gave them a priesthood and orders of cleanliness.

During a period of unrest, complaints, and conquests the Israelites complained of adversity (Numbers 11:1-3), foreigners traveling with the Israelites complained about food options, so God provided quail and punishment for their complaining (Numbers 11:4-9), Moses complained that the burden of leading a rebellious people was too heavy (Numbers 11:10-15), 70 men were appointed to help Moses lead the people (Numbers 11:16-25), then Miriam and Aaron murmured against Moses, so God sternly rebuked them and punished Miriam with leprosy (Numbers 12).

When the Israelites obeyed God's instructions life was well for them.

If they complained, rebelled, and disobeyed God's instructions strong consequences came to pass.

The last verse of Numbers 12 reveals that after Miriam was received back into the camp, the Israelites moved into the wilderness of Paran to camp there.

While camped in Paran, God instructed Moses to gather men who would go "spy out the land of Canaan—the Promised Land" (Numbers 13:1-3).

The call for leaders began with instructions for Moses, "Send out for yourself men so that they may spy out the land of Canaan...you shall send a man from each of their fathers' tribes, every one a leader among them."

God, also, reminded Moses this is the land, "...which I am going to give to the sons of Israel."

Recalling the LORD's instructions along the journey, "Moses sent [the men] from the wilderness of Paran at the command of the LORD."

Numbers 9:17-19, Moses recorded, “Whenever the cloud was lifted from over the tent, afterward the sons of Israel would then set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the sons of Israel would camp. At the command of the LORD the sons of Israel would set out, and at the command of the LORD they would camp; as long as the cloud settled over the tabernacle, they remained camped. Even when the cloud lingered over the tabernacle for many days, the sons of Israel would keep the LORD’s charge and not set out.”

In summation, Numbers 9:23 reads, “At the command of the LORD they camped, and at the command of the LORD they set out; they kept the LORD’s charge, according to the command of the LORD through Moses.”

Obedience to “At the command of the LORD” resulted in God going with Israel, protecting them, providing for them, and dwelling with them.

As Moses sent them out, “at the command of the LORD” should have brought the twelve spies confidence.

Possession and prosperity in the land would be highly dependent on the Israelites’ faithfulness.

Before sending the men to spy out the land, Moses gave them traveling instructions and review instructions (Numbers 13:17-20).

The spies were to go up by way of the Negev (southlands) and travel to the hill country (an area characterized by hills and mountains).

Moses instructed the men to search out the land—good or bad/fat or lean/trees or no trees, search out the people—strong or weak, few or many, and search out the cities—open camps or with fortifications.

The season of their trip was late summer or early fall as noted by the sentence, “Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes.”

The men were “to get (and bring back with them) some of the fruit of the land.” “So they went up and spied out the land...” (Numbers 13:21).

In the valley of Eshcol “a single cluster of grapes” was cut down.

The grape cluster was carried on a pole between two men.

Pomegranates and figs were also collected.

The land was good and productive; the fruit was bountiful and large.

Would they be enough to win over the spies?

II. Leading with Fear

The spies begin with a good report (Numbers 13:25-27).

The language of the initial report is consistent with the instructions God gave Moses and Moses gave to the spies, indicating initial faithfulness to their assigned task.

The first word of verse twenty-eight changes everything in this account.

“Nevertheless,” “however,” “but” or “yet” starts verse twenty-eight in most English Bibles.

What follows is a faithless report by ten of the spies (Numbers 13:28-29).

Ten of the spies began to grumble about the power of the people in the land.

The name Anak was associated with people of great size and military might who were famed and feared.

Three clans of these giants were identified (Numbers 13:22).

Some of the tribes living throughout the country were identified.

The Amalekites were living in the Negev.
The Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites were abiding in the
hill country.

The Canaanites were dwelling in the coastal plains and
valleys.

The spies reported that the cities were extremely well fortified and
large, inhabited by strong people.

Fear of great size caused ten of the spies to give this negative report about the people and
cities of the land.

The faithful servant Caleb spoke against the negative report before the grumbling
assembly, yet with the same terms, the ten spies negated Caleb's faithful report (Numbers 13:31-
33).

Each of the ten spies had his reason for giving this negative report that opposed
Caleb, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and God.

The faithless spies forsook God's promise to be with them, to give them decisive
victories, and to give them an inheritance as the people of God.

The Israelites joined with the ten spies, losing their perspective of the boundless
possibilities that await God's faithful people (Numbers 14:1-4).

III. Leading with Faith

Caleb, as the spokesperson for Moses, Aaron, and Joshua, led with faith as he challenged
the people, "We should by all means go up (as the spies had done initially) and take possession
of [the land] (as God had promised), for we will surely overcome it (by God's power)" (Numbers
13:30).

When the people were swayed by the negative report and responded with fear as we just
read in Numbers 14:1-4, the leadership responded with faith.

The Leaders of Israel, Moses and Aaron, fell humbly before God to beg His mercy be
upon the people (Numbers 14:5, 11-19).

Joshua and Caleb tore their clothes in sorrow and challenged the people to focus on
God's provision of the land (Numbers 14:6-8).

Then, Joshua and Caleb urged the rebellious in Israel not to fear (Numbers 14:9).

Although the righteous leadership in Israel responded by leading with faith, the people
choose to be led by fear (Numbers 14:10).

They surrendered to their lack of trust, delay-indecision-disobedience, cowardice,
exaggeration, bad decision making, pessimism, a failure to prioritize faith, hope, and love, public
opinion, waiting on a better season of life, and the weaknesses of human strength alone.

God intervened; God took care of His faithful leaders, then Moses pleaded with
God (Numbers 14:17-19).

Application:

A call for leaders has been issued.

The call charges each of us to search out the spiritual gift(s) God has given us for
a specific area of ministry, our personality type, our education, skills, and life experiences, along
with our passions.

Everyone who answers the call is a leader, helping to lead this congregation into
promised territory where successful growth will come spiritually and numerically.

Some have fears.

There are fewer mentors and role models than there are members.

God has called us to be leaders, leading each successive generation to the Lord and faithful service to Him.

We must defeat our fears of great size and lead with faith.

Assurance triumphs over fears.

Leaders are not born; they are developed.

When we learn to trust the LORD, we will overcome our fears; we will go and do “at the command of the LORD.”

Conclusion:

What rebellion keeps you from doing the LORD’s will?

What fears of great size do you need to conquer?

Accept God’s word and the divinely appointed leaders of this congregation.

Do not give in to a bad report of what our elders are trying to accomplish.

Every member is called to search out what God has put in them, see that it is exceedingly good, that through God success and blessings will come, and give a faithful report of what God has promised!

The call for us is to search out the land of the harvest.

God says it is “white for harvest” (John 4:35).

“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Luke 10:2).

God says that as the rain comes down from heaven to produce food for people’s bodies, His word comes down from heaven to produce food for people’s souls (Isaiah 55:11).

We are to sow the seed (Matthew 13), yet fear will keep us from obeying.

Do you believe that God will reward those who seek Him? Hebrews 11:6 reads, “without faith it is impossible to please Him (God), for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”

Would you repent, turn away from sin and turn to God? Acts 17:30 reveals that “God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness...”

Would you confess—publicly profess, admit, declare—belief, trust, confidence in Jesus? What report would you give of Jesus? In Matthew 10:32 and 33, Jesus tells us, “Everyone who confesses [Him] before men, [He] will also confess...before [His] Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies [Him] before men, [He] will also deny...before [His] Father who is in heaven.”

Would you be baptized “at the command of the LORD”? In the great commission, Jesus said, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

First, the Lord commanded His disciples to make disciples.

Next, the Lord commanded for disciples to be baptized.

Then, the Lord commanded baptized disciples to be taught “to observe all that [He] commanded.”

“At the command of the LORD” cast off fears of great size and respond in obedient faith.