



First Baptist Church At The Villages

INSPIRING FAITHFULNESS • CALEB • JOSHUA 14:6-15; MARK 14:14-24 •

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Main Point

The size of our God is much more important than the size of our faith.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the hardest thing you have ever done? Why was it so difficult?

What did you learn from that experience? How are you different today because of that experience?

Why does God allow us to face difficult decisions and challenging circumstances sometimes?

What might He be trying to teach us?

God never promised an easy life for Christians; in fact, Jesus promised the opposite. When facing a challenge, we can either shrink back or shift our focus from the size of the obstacle to the size of our God. That shift in focus is what allowed an ordinary man like Caleb to move forward despite the size of the task in front of him. The size of our God is much more important than the size of our faith.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Caleb was forty years old when he and Joshua were first sent with ten others to spy out the promise land. Forty five years later, the people of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal and Caleb was chosen to lead the charge back into the very land the other spies were too afraid to enter. Caleb demonstrated faith in the strength and promises of God that ought to bolster our faith with courage to do great things for God.

| Have a volunteer read Joshua 14:6-15.

Share about a time when the people around you pressured you to do something you knew was wrong. Do you wish you would have responded differently?

Why weren't the other ten spies, besides Caleb and Joshua, confident they would be able to take the promised land?

What kind of report did the other ten spies bring back to Israel (v. 8)? how did their report influence the Israelites?

What distinguished Caleb from the other spies? Why was He confident that they could take the promised land while everyone was shrinking back?

The ten had seen powerful people living in fortified cities which made them feel “like grasshoppers” by comparison. Caleb was confident that the One who had delivered them from bondage in Egypt was able to give them success in taking the land. While everyone else was overwhelmed by the size of the Anakim and the seeming impossibility of the task in front of them, Caleb “wholly followed the Lord [His] God” (v. 8). Caleb was able to remain faithful to God when everyone else was afraid because He focused his heart on the promise that God made to Moses to give them the promised land as an inheritance. In other words, when everyone else could only see the size of the challenge, Caleb focused on the power and faithfulness of God.

Forty five years had passed since Caleb had first gone out to spy the land and He was now 85 years old. How could Caleb be “as strong today” as he was in the day Moses sent him out?

Why was Caleb confident that he could successfully lead the charge against the Anakim (v. 12)?

Why was Hebron given to Caleb for an inheritance (v. 13)?

Twice in this passage, Caleb said that he “wholly followed the LORD” (vv. 8-9) and in verse 10 Caleb reminded the people that the LORD had kept him “alive, just as He said.” This tells us that Caleb’s strength came from the Lord. By following God and trusting in His promises when everyone else was fleeing in fear, Caleb was able to be as ready to enter the promised land as he was when he was forty-five years younger. In verse 13, Joshua informed us that Hebron was given to Caleb for an inheritance “because he wholly followed the Lord, the God of Israel.” Caleb demonstrated that faith is not a matter of age or ability. Caleb was able to what everyone else was afraid of because He believed the promises of God.

What promises has God made to us? Make a short list.

How might remembering these promises encourage you when facing difficult challenges?

| Have a volunteer read mark 14:14-24.

Why was Jesus so disheartened in verse 19?

The disciples' lack of faith caused Jesus grief. He responded with a cry of exasperation revealing His frustration and disappointment. Most likely in Mark 9:19 Jesus wasn't addressing the crowd or the boy's father, but instead was referring to the disciples. Jesus addressed His closest friends as unbelieving. They had failed because they lacked faith. Could Jesus call us unbelieving? We must learn that fruitfulness in ministry efforts come through faith in Jesus Christ, not through our own efforts. Apart from Christ we can do nothing.

Why do we sometimes have the same problem with limited faith that the boy's father had?

How might remembering that "all things are possible for the one who believes" (v. 23) encourage us to face the challenges in our lives?

Compare and contrast the faith of the boy's father in verse 24 with that of the disciples. What might we learn about how God wants us to seek him from the boy's father?

The boy's father recognized his faith was not perfect and was mixed with unbelief. The father demonstrated both honesty and distress in his response. He desperately needed Jesus to cure his son. Yet he realized that he was completely unworthy of Christ's compassion toward him. His coming to Christ showed a trembling faith, and this was enough. The key to joining God in doing the extraordinary is being honest about our the state of our faith—we serve a great God who can overcome our unbelief!

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Have you been tempted to shrink back from serving the Lord recently? How might considering Caleb's faith help you overcome your fears?

How, specifically, do you need Jesus to "help your unbelief" this week?

Who do you know who might need encouragement to "wholly follow the LORD" in the midst of difficult circumstances?

Pray

Pray that the Lord would help us overcome our fears as we seek to serve Him and participate in His kingdom. Thank God for His promise to grow and preserve our faith.

Commentary

| Joshua 14:6-15

14:6. Judah's relative importance, if only because of its larger size than the other tribes, may give it the right to go first. Caleb was one of the two spies, along with Joshua, who were sent to spy out the promised land and returned with a good report (Num 13-14). Caleb's designation as a Kenizzite is otherwise unattested, but may be related to the name of Caleb's brother, Kenaz (15:17).

14:7. Caleb's age of 40 at the time of the first spying out of the land puts him with the first generation of Israel who left Egypt. He now spoke to the new generation and recounted what they might not know.

14:8. For Israel to melt with fear recalls the defeat at the first assault on Ai (7:5). The defeat made Israel "melt with fear," just as the Canaanites had "melted with fear" when they learned of Israel's victories (2:11; 5:1; Ex 15:15). 14:9 See Num 14:24 and Dt 1:36 for the promise of God to Caleb through Moses.

14:10. Caleb's reference to 45 years suggests that, following the wilderness wanderings of about 40 years, the time spent in the battles of chapters 1-12 amounted to about five years.

14:11. The ongoing strength of Caleb despite his old age compares with that of Moses (Dt 34:7). He was still capable of fighting for his land and settling on it.

14:13-14. When the spies searched the land, they traveled its length. However, the description of their activity focused on Hebron and the nearby Valley of Eshcol (Num 13:22-24). These were located in the southern hill country of Judah. This would have been among the closest major inland towns in Canaan from their base at Kadesh-barnea. Thus the gift of land to Caleb involved the area of Hebron where he had visited and spent more time than anywhere else (Dt 1:36).

14:15. The note about Hebron's name recalls the mighty Anakim (11:21) who were there, and it anticipates Caleb's defeat of them in 15:14. Kiriath-arba is a second and earlier name for Hebron. The first part of the name means "city." Thus the note suggests the meaning, "city of Arba," where Arba is the name of the greatest man among the Anakim. This would predate Israel's appearance because none of the Anakim that Caleb fought (15:14) bore this name. The note that the land had rest from war indicates success for Caleb.

| Mark 9:19-24

9:19. When He heard this report, Jesus said, "You unbelieving generation." They missed a key principle. God bestows His power on those who believe that He can deal with issues that seem impossible. Jesus asked, "How long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?" He served among them for a limited time. Soon they would be left without His human presence to pick them up when they showed their incompetence. Jesus commanded the man, "Bring the boy to me." This demonstrated His intention to act. Although He showed frustration with those present, Jesus' compassion toward the needy never waned.

9:20. In a last desperate attempt at control, the demon afflicted the boy again. The child collapsed from severe convulsions. At this point, however, Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit. This classic confrontation between the healing power of God and the destructive power of the demon brought the incident to a head. Jesus won. He cured the boy. In a poignant demonstration of compassion, Jesus gave him back to his father.

9:21. Jesus was deeply moved with compassion for the child's condition. He asked how long the boy had been subject to such attacks. This question revealed Jesus' compassion. The boy experienced such torment since childhood. The reference to childhood could mean from infancy. Perhaps Jesus' question also had the purpose of demonstrating the hopelessness of the situation to the father. He wanted the man to confess the desperate nature of the boy's case. Jesus was showing this father that he had no other resource but faith in Christ.

9:22. The father told how his son had numerous attacks in which the demon had attempted to destroy the boy by throwing him into fire and water. The man expressed his distress in his desperate cry, "But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" The father probably realized that these near-fatal seizures could end only in disaster if they didn't receive help soon. Originally the father believed the boy would be cured by the disciples. The disciples' powerlessness evidently led him to doubt Jesus' ability to assist his son. The disciples' inability to cast out the demon had shaken the faith of the father. Nevertheless the man did not seem to doubt Jesus' compassion. Thus he asked for immediate help if such was possible.

9:23. Jesus focused attention on the father's doubt-filled words, "If You can." Up to this point the account had emphasized the lack of faith on the part of the disciples. At this point the emphasis began to turn to the father who brought the child to be cured.

Jesus' words gently reproved the father's lack of faith while at the same time strengthening the faith he had. The healing of his son would come in response to faith in Jesus. "All things are possible to him who believes." Jesus' statement doesn't lead to the conclusion that people can have anything they wish by faith. Jesus doesn't call persons to test God by irresponsible prayer for something they desire but that may not be His will. Instead our requests are to be in line with God's will.

9:24. Jesus' words were a promise. The father's response indicated he understood that fact, for he immediately cried out and said, "I do believe; help my unbelief." In this statement the father both affirmed his faith and also indicated he was deserving of the rebuke directed to the disciples. He, too, was a part of the unbelieving generation. He recognized his faith was not perfect. It was mixed with unbelief. The father demonstrated both honesty and distress in his response. He asked Jesus to help him overcome his unbelief.