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Extreme Makeover: Spirit Edition

Part 8: Faithfulness (Joshua 14: 6-9, Numbers 13: 1-33, 14: 6-9)

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INTRODUCTION:

Dependability sells! [TIMEX PICTURE] Four decades ago Timex sold watches on live national television by focusing on dependability. The announcer would do something outrageous like strap the watch to the propeller of an outboard motor and run the engine in a tank of water. He would then stop the engine, remove the watch, and hold it up for the camera. As the audience watched the second hand sweep around the dial, the announcer delivered the punch line.

"Timex! Takes a licking and keeps on ticking!"

In the unpredictable days of live television, this stunt spoke volumes about the faith the company had in the watch's dependability. It was their dependability at a reasonable price that sold millions of Timex watches.

Dependability still sells. [PICTURE OF THE MAYTAG REPAIRMAN] The lonely Maytag repairman, with his clean uniform and sad expression, reinforces the message that Maytag is produced by *"the dependability people"*. Your Maytag appliance won't let you down.

But the darling of dependability in advertising today has to be the ever-present, obnoxious [PICTURE OF THE ENERGIZER BUNNY] Energizer bunny. It keeps going and going, and going.

Verizon keeps asking – as they are "working for you": "Can you hear me now?"

Faithfulness is beautifully illustrated in the lives of Joshua and Caleb. I want to briefly study their lives today in order to teach us the ingredients of faithfulness.

We pick up Joshua and Caleb's lives as the children of Israel stood on the edge of the land promised them by God. Moses chose twelve spies to explore the new land. And whom did Moses select for this elite group of spies? The list is given in Numbers 13:4-16. I'll give a dollar to anyone who can name 3 of the list of 12. The only two we have heard of are the two filled with faithfulness: Joshua and Caleb. The other 10 - who were all leaders - came back filled with fear.

READ NUMBERS 13:1-2a, 21a, 23, 25, 27-28, 30-33; 14:5-11(NIV)

Num 13:1-2a

The LORD said to Moses, "Send some men to explore the land

Num 13:21a

So they went up and explored the land

Num 13:23

When they reached the Valley of Eshcol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs.

Num 13:25

At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land.

Num 13:27-28

They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there.

Num 13:30-33

Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."

But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."

Num 14:5-11

Then Moses and Aaron fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes and said to the entire Israelite assembly, "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them."

But the whole assembly talked about stoning them. Then the glory of the LORD appeared at the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites. The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them?"

How could these two see the land and people so differently than the other ten spies? Joshua and Caleb's secret was their faithfulness.

The fear perspective: This "good land" is populated by powerful people, some of whom are giants. *It devours those living in it* (13:32).

The faithfulness perspective: *Do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up* (14.9). KJV: *They are bread for us*...we'll eat 'em up!

The fear perspective: *But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there (Numbers 13:28).*

The faithfulness perspective: *Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them (Num. 14:9).*

Joshua and Caleb saw the problems in the Promised Land. But their faithfulness was more powerful than their fear. Physical giants are no threat when God is on our side. High walls and thick gates are no barrier when God removes their protection. The real threat to Israel was not the people of Canaan or their defenses. The most serious threat was the temptation to abandon God. Joshua and Caleb started and ended their speech in Numbers 14.9 with a warning: *Do not rebel against the Lord . . . Don't be afraid of them!*

You know, the greatest threat against Christians today is not

Secular mindset

Hostility toward Christians

The immoral pollution pouring out of our TV

Drugs or alcohol or addiction

The greatest threat that faces Christians today is the temptation to rebel against the Lord!!

I heard of a couple who went down to Florida and saw a Billboard advertising the Hardrock Café. It was a mustard-yellow color and bore this simple message in bold letters:

REVOLUTION, REBELLION, ANARCHY
(Bring the whole family)

Rebellion is being glorified today. Oh the price that we pay for rebellion! Look at Numbers 14:30, 34, 35, 37. It is...

1. **GENERATIONAL:** *Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness (Numbers 14:30).*
2. **PERSONAL:** *You will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you (Numbers 14:34).*
3. **TERMINAL:** *[Those who rebelled] will meet their end in the desert; here they will die. (Numbers 14:35).*

THE ANTIDOTE TO REBELLION IS FAITHFULNESS

What were the essential ingredients that led to their faithfulness?

To know the answer to this we need to look at what was the word used in the Greek language that we translate as faithfulness in the Fruit of the Spirit.

The Greek word for faithfulness is **πιστις**: (*Pistis*) As it is used in the Old and New Testaments it **literally means three things.** These three things are all characteristics in Caleb's and Joshua's lives and together they create **a formula for faithfulness.**

CALEB'S AND JOSHUA'S FORMULA FOR FAITHFULNESS:

1. CONVICTION (Joshua 14.6-9):

The passage that I refer to here is a record of what Caleb said 40 years after he took his stand as one of the 12 spies. 40 years later he gives us the first clue to the definition of what it means to possess faithfulness. I love the one phrase that Caleb used in this passage that either he or Joshua could have said: *I brought him [Moses] a report according to my convictions (14.7).*

Our convictions form the basis for our actions. If we don't believe it, we sure aren't going to live it.

If you don't make up your mind, your unmade mind will UNMAKE you.
-E. Stanley Jones

Have you nailed down your convictions? What do you stand for? Is the kingdom first in your life or are you messing with Jesus? Do the people at school, at work, in the neighborhood know what you stand for or are you sitting on the fence? Remember E. Stanley Jones' warning:

If you don't make up your mind, your unmade mind will unmake you.

Faithfulness starts with conviction. The formula for $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$ thus far is...

CONVICTION + _____ + _____ = $\pi\iota\sigma\tau\iota\varsigma$

The second part of the formula for faithfulness is . . .

2. CONFIDENCE (Numbers 14.6-9):

I love the story of baseball great Ty Cobb. [PICTURE OF TY COBB] On his 70th birthday Ty Cobb was interviewed by Larry King on the "Larry King Live" show. King asked him: "What do you think you'd hit if you were playing baseball these days?"

Cobb, who was a lifetime .367 hitter, said: "About .290, maybe .300."

King asked: "Is that because of the travel, the night games, the artificial turf, and all the new pitches like the slider?"

"No," Cobb replied, "it's because I'm seventy years old now."

That's the kind of confidence that Joshua and Caleb had. Forty years later, when God allowed the people to enter into the Promised Land, Caleb still asked to be given the hill country - the toughest land to take over; the land with the most fortified cities; the land with the biggest giants.

So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said.

-Joshua 14.10b-12

*What lies ahead and what lies behind are tiny matters compared to what lies WITHIN.
-Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Only when we have a conviction that we know is in keeping with the Lord's will, can we have a confidence that comes from the Lord. The Scriptural formula for *πιστις*:

COVICTION + CONFIDENCE + _____ = *πιστις*

Only when we have this holy conviction and holy confidence will we have the last part of the formula for faithfulness. The last part of the formula for faithfulness is

3. **COMMITMENT** (Joshua 24.14-15):

Many people have the right aim in life but they never pull the TRIGGER.

Commitment is a LINE you must cross . . . it is the difference between dreaming and doing.

At the end of his life, in his last speech before the people that he led. Joshua brought faithfulness into focus:

Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshipped beyond the River and in Egypt and serve the Lord. [nail down your convictions] But as for me and my household [confidence], we will serve the Lord [commitment]

-Joshua 24.14-15

Several years ago a young African Pastor who was enduring heavy persecution was kidnapped and never heard from again. While a missionary was cleaning out his humble dwelling he found this manifesto of faithfulness pinned to the wall of his tiny apartment.

I'm part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have Holy Spirit power. The die has been cast. I have stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I'm a disciple of His. I won't look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still.

My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, my future is secure. I'm finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, mundane talking, cheap living, and dwarfed goals.

I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits (praise, approval, recognition), or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean on His presence, walk by patience, lift by prayer, and labor by power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way rough, my companions few, my Guide reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice,

hesitate in the presence of the adversary, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till he comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till He stops me. And when He comes for His own, He will have no problems recognizing me - my banner will be clear.

APPLICATION:

CONVICTION + CONFIDENCE + COMMITMENT = *πιστις*

Conviction? What do you stand for? What banner are you flying? Is the Kingdom first in your life or are you messing around with Jesus? Have you ever come to the point of nailing down your convictions? I will stand for Jesus

Confidence? Are you living out your convictions, totally confident in the Lord? As you live each day, what is your confidence found in? Your know-how? The resources available? Or in an all powerful God that fills you with the power of His Spirit and sends you as His ambassador into the world to do His work?

Commitment? Have you committed yourself? Have you stepped over the line? Have you laid your life down? Have you picked up the cross? Have you submitted your life to the commitment to put God first?

Remember, faithfulness is a fruit of the Spirit. It is the result of the Spirit's fullness in our lives. It is not something you can muster up all on your own. Your responsibility is to come to a point of asking God to purify you from all sin and fill you completely with His Holy Spirit. The Bible calls this sanctification:

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24