

NOBODY COULD BELIEVE IT! (by Dr. Stan Reeder)

*#4 of 6 in Moses: Mr. Nobody – The Wilderness Years
Numbers 13 and 14*

INTRODUCTION:

Bill, Jim & Scott were at a convention together & were sharing a large suite on the top of a 75-story skyscraper. After a long day of meetings, they were shocked to hear that the elevators in their hotel were broken & they would have to climb 75 flights of stairs to get to their room.

Bill said to Jim & Scott, "Let's break the monotony of this unpleasant task by concentrating on something interesting. I'll tell jokes for 25 flights, Jim can sing songs for the next 25 flights and Scott can tell sad stories for the rest of the way."

At the 26th floor, Bill stopped telling jokes & Jim began to sing.
At the 51st floor Jim stopped singing & Scott began to tell sad stories.

"I will tell my saddest story first," he said. "I left the room key in the car..."

Today we are looking at one of the saddest stories I know. It revolves around the attitudes of the 12 spies that the Lord sent in to *explore the land of Canaan (Numbers 13:1)*

Many of you know the story that the 12 spies returned and gave the report. The land was a great opportunity and an incredible challenge. The 12 spies agreed on that - their report is given in Numbers 13:26-29. The point of disagreement came over what to do in response to the factual report. Joshua and Caleb were the two spies that said, "*we can certainly do it*" (*Numbers 13:30*). They had the faith attitude. The other 10 spies said, "*we can't attack those people*" (*Numbers 13:31*). They had the fear attitude.

The faith attitude:

We can certainly do it (Numbers 13:30).

The fear attitude:

We can't attack those people (Numbers 13:31).

The overwhelming characteristic of a negative attitude is capsulated in Numbers 13:31

*Negativity says, "We can't" (Num. 13:31)
when God has already said, "I will." (Gen. 13:15-16; 50:24; Num. 13:1)*

Negativity always denies the **promises** of God. Negativity denies the **providence** of God. Negativity denies the **provision** of God. Negativity denies the **presence** of God. Negativity denies the **protection** of God. Negativity denies the **prowess** of God. Negativity denies the **prodding** of God. Negativity denies the **pronouncements** of God

Negativity says: "It's impossible!"
God says: "All things are possible" (Luke 18:27).

Negativity says: "I'm too tired!"
God says: "I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Negativity says: "Nobody really loves me!"
God says: "I love you" (John 3:16).

Negativity says: "I can't go on!"
God says: "My strength is sufficient for you" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Negativity says: "I can't figure things out!"
God says: "I will direct your steps" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Negativity says: "I can't manage!"
God says: "I will supply all your needs" (Philippians 4:19).

Negativity says: "I'm afraid!"
God says: "I have not given you a spirit of fear" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Negativity says: "I'm so worried and frustrated!"
God says: "Cast all your cares upon me" (1 Peter 5:7).

Negativity says: "I don't have enough faith!"
God says: "I've given you the measure of faith that you need" (Romans 12:3).

Negativity says: "I'm not smart enough!"
God says: "Ask me, I'll give you the wisdom" (James 1:5).

Negativity says: "I feel so alone!"
God says: "I will never leave you or forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

Negativity says: "I can't do it!"
God says: "you can do all things through Christ" (Philippians 4:13).

TOP TEN TRAITS OF NEGATIVITY:

10. Negativity compares ourselves with others (Numbers 13:31).

We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are (Numbers 13:31).

The first thing negativity does is compare us and our resources with others. Do me a favor. Put your thumb up in the air. Now bring it down and put it right in front of your eyes so you can focus for a moment on your “thumb-print”. Do you realize that the pattern you are looking at right now is totally unique. Out of the over 6 billion people alive right now, you are the only one with that pattern. You are unique. Don’t compare yourself with others. God made you to be you.

But I’m so much weaker than other people. Wonderful . . . Paul had it figured out: ***I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses . . . for when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:9b-10).***

God comes to Paul and he came to the Israelites through Joshua and Caleb, and he comes to you in your negative-minded comparisons and he says: ***My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9a).***

If you have to compare . . . just compare the size and power of that which you are being negative about with the power of God and suddenly your fear will begin to turn to faith for the future.

9. Negativity exaggerates (Numbers 13:32-33).

Oh, negative thinking loves to make a mountain out of a molehill. The fear filled 10 said: ***All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there. (Numbers 13:32-33).*** Let me assure you, they did not see the Nephilim there. Who were the Nephilim? The Nephilim were super human offspring that resulted when ***“the sons of God went to the daughters of men” (Genesis 6:4).*** Let me assure you, they did not see the Nephilim in Canaan. These supernatural giants were wiped out by the flood back in Noah’s day. You have to look at Genesis 6 to get the full account of the Nephilim. But they did the dead man’s float several thousand years earlier. . . they were long gone. But negativity makes problems much bigger than they are. Instead of magnifying the problem . . . magnify God.

8. Negativity is contagious (Numbers 13:32; 4:1-2).

The bad report ***spread (Numbers 13:32).*** Within just a few hours of the negative report started to spread, ***That night all the people . . . raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, “If only we had died in Egypt (Numbers 14:1-2).***

Friends, your negative attitude is a big deal because it is highly contagious. Your attitude will infect your home, it will infect your school, it will infect your friends, it will infect your workplace, it will infect your church. A negative attitude is always a much bigger deal than the person who holds it because it is so contagious.

7. Negativity dwells on the past (Numbers 14:2-3).

Notice how negativity focuses on back in Egypt. Over and over throughout these wilderness years the people talk about how great it was back in Egypt. They longed for the leeks and onions and garlic and cucumbers they had in Egypt. “Oh, things were so much better in Egypt.” Let’s take a look at what it was like back in Egypt. Exodus 1 gives us the picture: the Egyptian **(11) slave masters . . . oppressed them with forced labor . . . (14) they made their lives bitter with hard labor . . . the Egyptians used them ruthlessly . . . (22) Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Every [Israelite] boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live (Exodus 1:11,14,22).** Oh yes, those were the days my friend, they thought they’d never end. . . Negativity always looks back about how great it used to be: “balogna”!

6. Negativity is based on fear (Numbers 14:9).

Verse 9 repeats the instruction two times: ***Do not be afraid.***

Negativity is based on fear. Christianity is based on faith. There are 365 “fear nots” in the Bible . . . that is one for every day of this year. You can face this day and the whole year ahead with faith rather than with fear. I have never met a person full of faith that was negative. I have never met a person full of fear that was positive.

5. Negativity is a sin (Numbers 14:19, 34).

There is no question whatsoever in these verses that negativity is a sin. In fact it is one of the most insidious of all sins.

E Stanley Jones, the great missionary and statesman wrote:

The sins of omission and commission are bad, but the worst sins are those of disposition (cited in Sayings of E. Stanley Jones Providence House, 1994. 25)

Negativity is simply defined as a sin. The good news is that, being a sin, it is something you can be forgiven for, cleansed from, and empowered by God’s Holy Spirit to overcome from this day forward.

4. Negativity limits blessings (Numbers 14:23, 25).

Friends, how important it is that negativity is overcome in your life. About those who were infected with this negative attitude regarding the taking of the promised land the Lord says: ***Not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their fathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it (Numbers 14:23).*** What a tremendous cost for a negative attitude. You have no idea what blessings you are missing because of a negative attitude. A negative attitude is the only thing that can negate the promises of God for your life.

3. Negativity is self-fulfilling (Numbers 14:28).

Listen to this ominous verse (Numbers 14:28) that records the Lord’s words: ***So tell them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the Lord, I will do to you the very things I heard you say: In this***

desert your bodies will fall – every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who grumbled against me (Numbers 14:28).

The very thing that they so negatively said would happen was brought to pass. Stop allowing even a negative thought to enter your mind. Negativity is self-fulfilling prophecy. Instead, be filled with faith through the presence of God's Holy Spirit.

2. Negativity hurts others (Numbers 14:33-34).

Look at the sad consequence that their negativity had on their innocent children: *Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the desert (Numbers 14:33).*

God forbid that He would have to get me out of the way before He can bless my children. Oh God, keep my attitude pure. Focus on *whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things And the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:9).* The alternative is to having God with you is having God against you. That is exactly the experience that these negative Israelites endured. Numbers 14:34 records: *For forty years – one year for each of the forty days you explored the land – you will suffer for your sins and know what it is like to have me against you (Numbers 14:34).*

1. Negativity yields devastating damage (Numbers 14:40-43).

The first thing that God does is deal with the 10 spies: *(37) these men responsible for spreading the bad report about the land were struck down and died of a plague before the Lord (Numbers 14:37).*

The second devastating damage is that unrepentant negativity eventually takes us down a path of no return. After the people saw the 10 spies die and heard that God would place his hand against them, look at their response in Numbers 14:40: *“We have sinned,” they said. “We will go up to the place the Lord promised.” But Moses said . . . (42) Do not go up, because the Lord is not with you. You will be defeated by your enemies . . . (43b) Because you have turned away from the Lord, he will not be with you, and you will fall by the sword.*

Oh, the devastating effects of negativity in our lives.

APPLICATION:

Is there any area in your life in which you are maintaining a negative attitude? Will you, in faith, accept God's “I will” provision for that matter.

Friends, by God's grace you have been warned today about the traits and consequences of a negative attitude. By God's grace, He sent the faithful four to the Israelites. On two separate occasions God warned the people. First He raised-up Caleb and Joshua. Next he raised-up Moses and Aaron. He spoke his will clearly through these faithful four.

His Word has spoken to us again today - *The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).*

One of the worst consequences of a negative attitude is it limits what God can do in our lives; it keeps us from living holy lives.

We can become so entrapped by sin in our lives that we eventually come to have a negative attitude about God's power to forgive and cleanse and to give us a life of freedom and victory.

A **habit** can take such a hold on our lives that we eventually give in to it. An **unforgiving** spirit can run so deeply that we believe forgiveness is impossible.

Our **emotions** have controlled us for so long that we no longer believe there is anything we can do about our **temper**, or our **irritability**, or our **moodiness**.

We've struggled so long to stop **lying**, to stop **lusting**, to stop **gossiping**, to stop **smoking**, to stop **drugs**, to stop **drinking** ...

We've come to the point of thinking ... "I can't do it!"

Friends "I can't" is the "Fear Attitude", that is negativity.

Negativity is a sin that treats God and His care for you with contempt.

*The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, **they have divine power to demolish strongholds** (2 Corinthians 10:4).*

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

That habit, that emotion, that attitude is nothing more than a pretension that has set itself up against God's good, pleasing and perfect will.

You can leave here today a free man, a free woman. His sanctification includes the purification of your attitude and ANYTHING that sets itself up against God's good, pleasing, and perfect will. You can leave here with a holy, Jesus-attitude: ***Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).***

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit [that is your attitude], soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

What kind of attitude is controlling your life today – "I can't" or "God will"?

The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it (1 Thessalonians 5:24).