

THE POWER OF YOUR ATTITUDE

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Lessons From The Twelve Spies

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Our attitude is our choice... And the choice we make concerning our attitude makes all the difference!**
1. Like the old proverbial question, "Is the cup half full or half empty? Or is the glass just too big for the drink?" → A good attitude & a bad attitude are simply two different ways of looking at the same situation! A choice we all make from the time we get out of bed in the morning!
 2. Quote from Rick Pitino in "Success is a Choice" → This isn't just a sports thing, it's a spiritual thing!
- B. Throughout the Bible we find many examples of people whose attitude made the difference – Between success and failure: Physically & Spiritually – In their own lives, in their nation, and in their church**
1. Consider this example: How many of you can tell me what's important about these men → Shammau, Shaphat, Igal, Palti, Gaddi, Ammiel, Sethur, Nahbi, and Geuel?
 - a. Pretty much only those who remember really strange things or those who remember being asked this in a sermon or Bible class before will recall who these guys are
 - b. On the other hand if I were to ask you who Joshua & Caleb were most hands would go up!
 - c. Those ten guys were the ten spies who brought back the negative report after spying out Canaan while Joshua & Caleb showed great faith and brought back a positive report
 2. As we compare the two responses given by the spies it becomes very clear that our attitude is a matter of faith! It either weakens or strengthens your faith & it is a reflection of your faith!

I. LET'S BEGIN BY SETTING THE SCENE:

- A. The children of Israel have come through the desert and have finally reached the borders of Canaan:**
1. Remember, that the land of Canaan is the land of promise God was giving them (**Ex 3:1-7**)
 - a. By giving the children of Israel this land, God would be bringing to complete fulfillment two of the promises He made to Abraham (Land + Nation) - Promises they loved dearly!
 - b. From the time Moses first spoke to them of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, through the desert, and to now they have heard this magnificent place described!
 - c. They've heard many promises about this land, received many laws about how to live in it, and reaching it has been their focus! Now at its borders they must be excited!
 2. Before they begin their invasion and conquest of Canaan, God instructs Moses to send in twelve spies to check out the land: (**Numbers 13:1-2**)
 - a. They were charged with checking out what Canaan was like – Were the people strong or weak, how fortified are its cities, is the land good or bad, and what was its fruit like?
 - b. The spies return with some incredible news and evidence to back it up: They basically reported "The land is everything it was said to be and more!" (**vs. 23, 25-27**)
 - c. God has promised them a land that flows with milk and honey and they have arrived at its borders, they know firsthand the land is great, and it's time to march forward, right?
 3. There's just one problem – Two of the spies were confident the land was theirs for the taking while ten of the spies thought conquering it was an impossibility! (**Numbers 13:30-33**)
 - a. The ten brought incredible reports about the land; however, they also brought incredible reports about the people... They saw them as giants and said it's impossible to win!
 - b. Joshua & Caleb came in excitement saying, "Let's go!" – Not only were they convinced

- they could conquer the land but they could also occupy it... It was theirs for good!
- c. Sadly, the people as a group listened to the ten and not to Joshua and Caleb... And as we know God punished them by making them wander in the wilderness for 40 more years and all of those of age, except Joshua & Caleb, were not allowed to enter

B. When we stop to consider all that Israel had experienced, their lack of faith seems incredible!

1. From their days in Egypt to the borders of Canaan they saw & experienced the power of God!
2. With all of this in mind, how could they not believe God would give them the victory?

II. NOW CONSIDER THE TWO ATTITUDES THAT DETERMINED THEIR SPIRITUAL SUCCESS OR FAILURE:

A. First we see a negative and faith destroying attitude among the 10 spies:

1. They had an inferiority complex which was rooted in their fear: **(Num 13:33; 14:9)**
 - a. They had what is termed the grasshopper complex! They saw themselves as tiny little helpless grasshoppers who would certainly be crushed by those big giants!
 - b. Their feelings of inferiority were so strong that they paralyzed them in fear! They weren't grasshoppers when crossing the Red Sea or standing at Mt Sinai! But they forgot this
 - c. They forgot that God was with them and that the battle belonged to Him! **(1 Sam 14:47)**
 - d. Too many Christians are so afraid to fail that they never put forth the effort! While they don't say it verbally they feel that to keep from failing they won't even try! Some don't feel good enough to capable enough to do some task **(Philippians 4:13)**
2. Then they developed a wholly negative and pessimistic mindset: **(Numbers 13:27-28)**
 - a. As they sought to evaluate their trip negativism took over... The excitement of the grandeur of Canaan gave way to statements of impossibility – They had given up!
 - b. A negative attitude is one of the devils most effective tools! It keeps the one holding it in a constantly bad mood and unproductive and it hinders those who are working
 - c. There is often nothing more discouraging then a constant pessimistic attitude – This may be vocalized but it also can be portrayed just by an unwillingness to participate
3. They used emotional tactics to persuade the people to take their side **(Numbers 14:1-2)**
 - a. It wasn't long before this that the people were eagerly anticipating conquering the land and now they are standing back wishing they died while slaves in the land of Egypt
 - b. The hearts of the people are now filled with terror – Picture their camp as it's filled with uncontrolled weeping! They even decide they want to stone Joshua and Caleb!
 - c. Emotionalism is a strong thing! It makes people lose focus and causes them to be unable to see reality! It caused them to forget just how bad their bondage in Egypt was!
 - d. Emotional responses causes people to throw out solid Biblical reasoning and faith!
4. What drove their attitude of failure? Their hearts were filled with unbelief **(Heb 3:17-19)**
5. The result of their negative attitude was rebellion against God and His will! Standing at the border of the promised land, they start wishing they could return to Egypt! **(Number 14:3-4)**

B. Next we observe a positive attitude, a different spirit, in Joshua and Caleb:

1. They demonstrated great confidence in God and His presence:
 - a. They knew that God was present and with them, that victory was theirs because God was going to fight for them, and so they determined to do God's will **(Numbers 14:9)**
 - b. Don't forget that Joshua and Caleb saw the exact same giants as the other tens spies saw,

- but they saw them in a totally different light! Since God was on their side the roles were reversed... Israel was the real giants & those in Canaan were the grasshoppers!
- c. Sometimes we see the work we are trying to accomplish as too big & sometimes it seems our circumstances are insurmountable... We must remember who is fighting for us!
 2. They showed great courage even though others around them were trembling in fear:
 - a. Joshua and Caleb stepped in and tried to convince the children of Israel that they must press forward, even though the people were about to stone them! **(Numbers 14:6-8)**
 - b. He has this courage all his life... even at 85 he was ready to fight giants! **(Joshua 14:12)**
 - c. As we all have giants to face, if we keep courageous we will overcome! **(Joshua 1:9)**
 3. They had a positive & optimistic attitude though a negative pessimistic one prevailed **(Num 13:30)**
 - a. **Illustration:** Two mules named Willing and Able – All of us need to be willing and able!
 - b. Sometimes the opposition we face comes from the most unexpected source... our own brethren! We cannot allow their negative attitude keep us from pushing God's cause forward or wind up costing us our own salvation! (person quits due to this)
 - c. One of the first steps in the process of failure is the words, "I Can't" – You may not be able to, but have you tried? Then how do you know? If you can't, help others who can, but whatever you do, don't sit back and talk about how impossible it is to do!
 4. Their greatest asset that led to their success was a strong and deep rooted faith in God:
 - a. Their courage, confidence, & optimism was the result of their faith! **(Num 13:30; 14:7-8)**
 - b. They had seen God's work in the past, they experienced God's providence personally in their lives, they knew the assurance of His words, & the power of His presence
 - c. A bad attitude toward God, spiritual things, and His service is often an indicator of a weak faith! In our minds we know that God exists, we know about His work in the past, and we've experienced His providence personally... Now we've got to apply it!
 5. Because of their good attitude and faith they carried through in obedience to God

C. This comparison demonstrates that our attitude makes the difference between success and failure and is a direct reflection of our faith in God!

1. Have you ever stopped to wonder why God wanted Moses to send the spies in the first place?
 - a. This really bugged me – Because God promised them the land, promised that it was flowing with milk and honey, and God was going to lead them to victory... So it would seem the spies didn't need to go into the land, but simply put their trust in God!
 - b. It seems this spying mission was a test of their faith in Him – To see how strong the people and their cities were and still be confident that it was theirs took great trust in God!
 - c. Remember the nature of this generation – They were often complaining and murmuring and were characterized by unbelief! If that generation went into the land it might've been disastrous, but the generation under Joshua was very faithful and saw victory!
 - d. In life we are going to face our giants... Situations and struggles that seem impossible are tests of our faith and our attitude toward it shows our trust or lack thereof
2. While we've made a lot of personal applications, there are great lessons here for a church as well!
 - a. There's great work that needs to be done here, there are plenty of doors of opportunity open, and this church has a great future – Our attitude is going to make the difference!
 - b. Some are grasshoppers & are always make excuses for a lack of activity or growth, they only see obstacles, & speak positively about the past but negatively about the future!

- c. Some respond in faith – They eliminate the excuses and get to work anyway, they see the many opportunities to serve and grow, and they speak positively about the future
 - d. Every church has both of these individuals! Which will we follow? Which will we become?
3. A positive or negative attitude is something that is very contagious! **(Judges 2:7)**
- a. Joshua & Caleb weren't able to save that generation, even though their faith & attitude was great, but they were able to influence the future generation to be faithful!
 - b. Whether you realize it or not you are influencing others! Sadly, it often does not take much for a lot of good and hard work to be destroyed by a few negative people!
4. Our attitude determines whether we are blessed by God or whether we will be punished by Him:
- a. All those people who didn't believe had to wander in the wilderness and ultimately had to die there – The ten spies were struck down by God that day for their unfaithfulness
 - b. Joshua & Caleb got to lead the invasion and were given a high place among the people!
 - c. While those who were punished didn't get to enter Canaan, it would stand to reason they could still be saved if they returned in faith to God! But for us our promised land is Heaven... If we let a bad attitude control our lives & we miss it, we've missed it all!