

## It's a Matter of Trust – Life Lessons from Desert Wanderings

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Many police departments still use a Glock handgun as their service weapon. I've had two different service weapons since I joined the Park Service. I started with a Smith and Wesson 9mm and we used that horrible gun. About 7 years ago, we changed over to Glock. Glock is an Austrian company and they are known to make a very dependable gun. They may not be the best gun for accuracy, but they will usually shoot under any condition. They can get dirty and still shoot. They are not my favorite gun, but if I want a gun I can trust to shoot when needed under danger, that would be the gun. The Smith and Wesson would jam up whenever a little dirt would get inside the gun. It was not dependable to me. It is hard to trust most things and that includes human beings as well. We used to trust our doctors and now that trust has been broken because of the broken medical system in our country. We can no longer trust our court system because now judges make judgment on their personal likes and dislikes instead of going through the law process. Trust is a broken word even within the Church system. I was talking to someone a while back whose son and family used to be involved in the Church until the priest sex scandal became big news. They no longer trust priests. Maybe it's always been hard to trust things and people. Maybe that's why so many Christians today have a hard time trusting Jesus with their whole life. We sometimes forget that trust is part of faith. Faith contains three ingredients which are belief in Jesus, love in Jesus, and trusting in Jesus. Missing one of these ingredients will weaken our faith in Jesus Christ. As we get back into life lessons learned by Israel during their wondering years with Moses, we'll look today into one of the issues Israel had with God. They had a hard time trusting the Lord. Before we start reading Scripture, let's look at the definition of "trust". I Googled the term and found this definition from Oxford: firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something. Then they add: relations have to be built on trust.

So, with that definition in mind, let's turn to Numbers 13: 1-3 where we read this, "13 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup> "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel. From each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a chief among them." <sup>3</sup> So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran, according to the command of the LORD, all of them men who were heads of the people of Israel." (Biblegateway.com) The Lord tells Moses to send a chief or leader from each tribe of Israel and they are to spy out the land that the Lord will give to the people. God makes a very pointed statement here – "land of Canaan, which I am giving to the people of Israel". So they are to spy out the area which will be given to them by God period. This was a common practice and has been throughout the human race. General George Custer sent spies out to survey the land around Little Bighorn to see where the Indians were. His scouts failed badly and the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment (210 men) and Custer were wiped out by the Indians. For the Israelites, it was different. God had told them He was going to give the land to them before they sent the spies. So, the people of Israel must have been excited about this new way of life that was just around the corner. I'm sure they couldn't wait to hear the report of the spies. The people thought the spies would come back and say how great everything would be. Everything is going to be peaches and cream. Well, let's see what happens.

Let's go to Numbers 13: 25 – 14: 11 where we read this, "<sup>25</sup> At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. <sup>26</sup> And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. <sup>27</sup> And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. <sup>28</sup> However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. <sup>29</sup> The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan."



<sup>30</sup> But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it." <sup>31</sup> Then the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are." <sup>32</sup> So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. <sup>33</sup> And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them."

**14** Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. <sup>2</sup> And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! <sup>3</sup> Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?" <sup>4</sup> And they said to one another, "Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt."<sup>5</sup> Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the people of Israel. <sup>6</sup> And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes <sup>7</sup> and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. <sup>8</sup> If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. <sup>9</sup> Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them." <sup>10</sup> Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. But the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel.<sup>11</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, "How long will this people despise me? And how long will they not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them?"

The report from the spies starts off well. The land is flowing with milk and honey. In other words, this land is a farmer's dream - big and healthy crops. The problem was since the crops were so good; the people of the land are large and powerful as well. In other words, their armies would be bigger and better than Israel's. The spies, except for Caleb and Joshua, were scared to death by what they saw of the people in this new land. We see that Caleb is all excited about going in and taking the land. In chapter 14: 6, Joshua has the same mindset as

Caleb. They want to take the land. However, the other spies don't and their negative talk starts to spread with all the people of Israel to the point where the people wished they had died in Egypt or in the wilderness. They complained against Moses and Aaron and then in verse three they complained against God. God had told them over and over again during their departure from Egypt and through their journey in the wilderness that He was giving them a land that was flowing with milk and honey. This is all Israel did throughout their journey with God – they complained. They believed in God, but they didn't trust in God. Remember the definition of trust - firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something. Then they add: relations have to be built on trust. Their relationship with God was always strained because they didn't trust God. Caleb and Joshua trusted God. They weren't afraid to fight people bigger and stronger than themselves. They remembered what God had done before and they remembered that God had told them He would give them the land. The people of Israel had a major trust issue with God. Why?

Let's go back to Egypt for a moment. Let's turn to Exodus 6: 6 – 9. Israel is in Egypt as slaves and God gives them this promise, "I am the Lord, and I will free you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with mighty power and great acts of judgment. I will make you my own special people, and I will be your God. And you will know that I am the Lord your God who has rescued you from slavery in Egypt. I will bring you into the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It will be your very own property, I am the Lord!" So Moses told the people what the Lord had said, but they wouldn't listen anymore. They had become too discouraged by the increasing burden of their slavery. (NLT)" You see, Pharaoh had made things harder for the Israelites by having them make bricks without straw without lowering their daily quota. God had promised them things would be ok. Israel believed in God, but they didn't trust God when things got tough. For a Christian, trusting the Lord is so important for strong faith. When we become discouraged with God, this is a warning sign that our trust in God is starting to break. I'm not saying we can never be discouraged. If you spend two months in a hospital or have one health issue after another, you can become discouraged. Anybody would. However, when we start to become discouraged



with God because we think He is not acting fast enough or not He's not answering our prayer the way we want Him to, our trust in Him will start to waver. If you read through the Old Testament, Israel was always getting discouraged with God – they didn't have trust in God. Any little trouble they had, they got discouraged with God. Before we get too hard on Israel, let's make sure our trust in God is strong because at some point, that trust will be tested. Do we really trust God as we think we do? When things get tough, can we really trust God when things don't go the way we want? I just heard news of a family that lost two of their little children in a car crash. The parents couldn't have children, so they adopted only to lose them in the crash. The parents stated they were leaning on their faith in God. I believe we could say they were trusting God to carry them through this horrible tragedy.

Let's look at some Scripture that can help us trust God more and more. In Proverbs 3: 5-6, we read, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (NIV)" King Solomon tells us to trust the Lord with all our heart. This follows the same command found in Deuteronomy 6: 5 where God tells Israel to love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their strength. When this happens and only then are we able to trust the Lord with all our heart.

When this happens, then Romans 15: 13 becomes reality, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (NIV)" We have joy and peace because we know and trust that Jesus is with us no matter the situation. Plus, Paul adds the Holy Spirit into the mix. When we trust Jesus with everything we have, the Spirit gives us joy and peace. The same joy and peace poor people have who have learned to be content with what they have. Just as His Spirit helps us to love Jesus, this same Spirit helps us to trust Him more and more.

As our trust grows, Jeremiah 17: 7-8 becomes real to us, "But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat

comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit. (NIV)” Trust makes us resilient – even when life “heats up.” We stay grounded (ChatGPT). Trust is not only an important part in our faith when we first believe in Jesus, but trust becomes important when a drought comes into our life. Our trust in Jesus will keep us rooted in Jesus and we can have peace and joy during the drought. This is so important for us. Many Christians don’t enjoy this peace and joy because their trust in Jesus is weak. They’re not relying on the Holy Spirit enough. Do you really trust Jesus? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to trust Jesus more and more!

“Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act. (ESV)”

*NLT Life Application Study Bible*: Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, 1996