



## eLesson 029

**Text: Numbers 13 & 14 and Deuteronomy 1**

**Subject: Faithfulness**

### Caleb ... Part 1

#### A Faithful Man in a Faithless Crowd

**The Old Testament story of Caleb** is intriguing, challenging, and encouraging ... but too often it is untold. Most Christians remember little more about him than his being one of the two faithful spies who gave a good report to Moses. The other faithful spy, Joshua, is the one that most of us remember. Caleb has been passed over by many Christians. Neither of these faithful men made the list of the faith heroes in Hebrews 11. However, if I made my own list of faith heroes, Joshua *and* Caleb would be on it. He is one of my favorite people in the Bible. God described him as a man who, *"has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully,"* Numbers 14:24. Could God say that about you ... or about me? Caleb was a proven leader and a faithful man. He saw obstacles as opportunities. He saw fear and faithlessness as blasphemy. He suffered and waited because of others. At 85, he was as strong, as courageous, and as full of faith as he had been at 40. He finished strong. As I write this lesson, college basketball tournaments are being played in the USA. A team must have a strong second half to win the game. The early minutes of every game are important ... but most games seem to be decided in the last minutes. A team must finish strong to win. Caleb finished strong. He was strong to the end. Why? What made him so different? Moreover, what about us? Will we have a strong second half? Will we finish strong? Or will we ease up and coast home? Each of us needs to learn how to finish strong. We need to learn from the story of Caleb.

***I am young, why should I care about Caleb?*** Are you thinking that? I must tell you that it is a challenge to write these lessons because you, the subscribers, are such a diverse group. You live in many countries and on many continents. You are young, middle-aged, and older. You are students, housewives, businessmen, businesswomen, missionaries, pastors, youth workers, teenagers, parents, grandparents, and more. However, even with all of this diversity, the story of Caleb is important to each and every one of you. It is obviously important to those of you in the second half of life ... and particularly to you who are late in the second half of life. However, it is especially important to those of you who are young. If you are young and reading this lesson, then you must be enthusiastic about Jesus. I commend you for your zealous and vibrant faith. I want you to do something at your next youth meeting, college meeting, or young adults' Bible study. Look around at the other people in that meeting. I have a prediction about them. Most of them will not finish strong. Many will become lukewarm like the Laodiceans of Revelation 3:14-22. Many of them will be squeezed into the mold of the world as warned about in Romans 12:2. In five to fifteen years, many of them will live lives indistinguishable from the lives of the non-believers of this world. Their marriages will fail at the same rate as those of lost people. They will suffer because of immorality, alcohol, and drugs with the same frequency as their non-believing friends. They will have ceased to grow spiritually. Most will have lost their zeal and enthusiasm. They will not be sharing their faith. They will act more like the walking dead than those who have

been made alive by the Spirit of God. Of those who continue on in the Church, many will be little more than pew fodder. They will be dull drones providing the body count and resources for the leader to perform his ministry. I do not write this prediction to discourage you ... I really do not. I write it as a warning ... an alarm ... a wake-up call ... a shot across the bow of your spiritual boat. Sadly my prediction will probably prove true. However, it does not have to be true for you. I have been a believer since 1956 ... and have not lost my zeal and enthusiasm. Caleb was as strong at 85 as he was at 40. He did not become lukewarm. He was a fighter to the end. You can be too. That is why Caleb's example is so important ... so important for you. Why was he strong at 40 ... and still strong at 85? To learn from his example, you must understand his story. To understand his story, you need to understand the context of his life.

**Caleb was born in Egypt** near the end of the 400-year captivity of the Israelites. He was born at about the time when Moses, at about 40, killed an Egyptian and fled to Midian. Caleb, although a member of the kingly tribe of David and Jesus, lived his first 40 years as a slave in Egypt. The long wait for the deliverance of the Israelites did not diminish Caleb's faith. He was about 40 when Moses, at 80, returned to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. Moses led the people out of Egypt ... across the Red Sea ... south to Mt. Sinai (described in Exodus). At Mt. Sinai, God gave the law through Moses (in the end of Exodus and in Leviticus). Leaving Mt. Sinai, they went north to Kadesh-Barnea to enter the Promised Land from the south. They did not go directly in. God had told them to go directly in to possess the land. But they asked if they could send spies in first. Their request pleased Moses. He sent 12 leaders, one from each tribe, as spies into the land to see what it was like ... supposedly to gather information to develop battle strategies. I do not understand that. As early as the burning bush, God had told Moses that this good land, flowing with milk and honey, would be their land, Exodus 3:8. When Moses initiated the ordinance of the Passover after they first left Egypt, he told the people of that promised good land, Exodus 13:5. Moses knew what the land was like ... God had told him. He knew that God would be with them when they obediently entered the land. Moses knew that they could be victorious with God on their side. Then why did he agree to send in the spies? Did he think that previewing their enemies would increase the Israelite's faith? What about you? Do you want to spy out the land of your future? Do you want, right now, to know all that God has planned for your future? Do you want a full preview of all your future battles and all of your future enemies? Or will you trust Him to reveal just enough when, and if, you need to know? Do you want to send in your spies to scout out the land? Or do you want to press on to take the land in simple faith and direct obedience? Do you prefer to trust His sight or your own sight?

**Those twelve spies scouted the land for 40 days.** Ten came back with a fearful, faithless report. The people embraced that bad report. The two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, gave a good report ... one that was rejected by the people. Those two knew that with God all things are possible ... even taking the hill country where the giants lived. However, the people refused to go into the land. The men of Israel said that they were afraid that their wives and children would become plunder. Isn't that typical of fearful, faithless men? Fearful, faithless men so often hide behind their wives and children. So many churches around the world are predominately filled by women. In spite of male leadership in the pulpit, so many churches are matriarchal in practice and in the pews. Where is the church that has more men than women in it? Where is the church that is more patriarchal than matriarchal? Faithful, fearless men do not hide behind their wives and children. Faithful, fearless men lead in their homes and in their churches. God condemned all the people of Israel who were 20 years old and older (the age of military conscription, Numbers 1:45) to wander and die in the wilderness. All of that age were condemned except Joshua and Caleb. The children, who the faithless men thought would suffer at the hands of their enemies, would go into the land ... but only after they had suffered because of their parents' sin. The ten faithless spies suffered in their own way for their faithlessness and disobedient influence ... they died in a plague.

**The Israelites would not go in with God.** When they refused to be obedient, God withdrew His command for that generation to enter the land. Their opportunity for obedience had passed. God held the door open ... they refused ... then He closed the door. Wouldn't it have been foolish if the Israelites decided, at that point, to go into the land ... to go in without God? That is exactly what they did ... and they were severely defeated and driven back. They were unwilling to enter the land with God. Then after God withdrew His presence, they went in without Him to certain defeat.

Wasn't that so very foolish? We would never do anything so foolish ... would we? The Israelites wandered for 40 years ... one year for every day that the spies were in the land. Joshua and Caleb suffered through those 40 years of wandering because of the sin of their peers. They were faithful and obedient ... but suffered with the faithless, disobedient group. Doesn't that make you want to choose your group carefully? The Israelites were counted (numbered) before the spies went into the land and again near the end of the 40 years of wandering (recorded in Numbers). When their wandering was over, Moses led them north to the east side of the Jordan River. There he gave them instructions about the law for a second time (Deuteronomy). Moses commissioned Joshua as his successor to lead the people into the land. God took Moses to the top of Mt. Nebo to show him the land that he could not enter. Moses was first told that he would not enter the land because of the people's refusal to enter from Kadesh-Barnea, Deuteronomy 1:37. Later he was told he would not enter the land because of his own sin, Numbers 20:8-12. Having never entered the land, Moses died. The Lord buried him in a location, unknown to man, in the valley of the land of Moab. Joshua led the people into the land to conquer, divide, and settle in it (recorded in the book of Joshua). At 85 years old, Caleb went in to take his portion of the land. He took what had been promised to him 45 years earlier by Moses. Caleb took the hill country ... the land of the giants. He took the city of Hebron. What would Caleb think of recent happenings in Hebron? If he watched the evening news reports from the West Bank, would he be pleased? If you are somewhat unfamiliar with the flow of Old Testament events, you might want to review Lesson 4 of Disciplemaking 1 from Level 2 training on [www.MyDisciplemaker.org](http://www.MyDisciplemaker.org). The direct link to the Old Testament overview is: <http://www.mydisciplemaker.org/d1oldtestament1.html>.

**There are two reasons** why I have explained the context of Caleb's life. First, it is necessary to understand that context to gain the full benefit of Caleb's example. Second, there are many lessons from within that context. You may have noticed that I did not put many references within the lesson ... I didn't think it was necessary. Almost all of this detail can be found in Numbers 13, 14 and Deuteronomy 1. It would be good for you to read those three chapters ... making a list of the distinguishing characteristics of Caleb's life. That will be the subject of the two next lessons.

(This lesson is the first of a three-part eLesson)

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## Study Questions Answers at end of lesson.

1. Who were the two good spies sent into the Promised Land by Moses?
2. What was God's critique of Caleb, Numbers 14:24?
3. At what two ages do we see Caleb in the Biblical record?
4. In what way do too many Christians end their lives like the Laodiceans?
5. Caleb was born where and when?

6. What happened to Caleb at about the time that Moses killed the Egyptian?

7. How did Moses know that the land was good?

8. The Israelites were afraid of whom?

9. Whom did the men use as an excuse for their fear?

10. The Israelites wandered one year for every what?

11. Why did Caleb wander in the wilderness for 40 years?

12. Did Moses enter the Land?

13. How old was Caleb when he finally entered the Land?

14. Caleb was a strong what?

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## Personal Reflection

No answers provided for these questions.

1. Did you know much of the story about Caleb before reading this eLesson ... and what does that say about your knowledge of the Old Testament?

2. Have you seen some of your Christian friends becoming lukewarm?

3. Are you becoming lukewarm?

4. Would you have been one of the faithful spies or one of the faithless ones? Why?

4. Do you really need to know all the details of what God has planned for you?

5. Do you prefer to trust His sight or your own sight? How does that work out in your life?

6. Are you willing to go into any situation with Him?

7. Describe some situations you have gone into without Him.

8. Have you ever suffered because of others' faithlessness? How?

9. What major lessons have you learned so far from the example of Caleb?

10. How will you live so that God will one day say of you, *"He has a different spirit and has followed Me fully"*?

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## Answers to Study Questions

1. Who were the two good spies sent into the Promised Land by Moses? **Joshua and Caleb.**
2. What was God's critique of Caleb? ***"He has a different spirit and has followed Me fully."***
3. At what two ages do we see Caleb in the Biblical record? **At 40 and 85.**
4. In what way do too many Christians end their lives like the Laodiceans? **Being luke-warm.**
5. Caleb was born where and when? **In Egypt near the end of the 400 year captivity of the Israelites.**
6. What happened to Caleb at about the time that Moses killed the Egyptian? **He was born.**
7. How did Moses know that the land was good? **God told him, Exodus 3:8.**
8. The Israelites were afraid of whom? **The big men in the land.**
9. Whom did the men use as an excuse for their fear? **Their wives and children.**
10. The Israelites wandered one year for every what? **One for each day the spies were in the land.**
11. Why did Caleb wander in the wilderness for 40 years? **Because of the other people's sin.**
12. Did Moses enter the Land? **No.**
13. How old was Caleb when he finally entered the Land? He was **85.**
14. Caleb was a strong what? **A strong finisher.**

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