

# Messages from the Wilderness 9 - You Have a Mission

## 1. The spies lost sight of the mission.

In Numbers 13 we come to the reason why Israel was going to have to spend 40 years in the wilderness. Here, Moses is charged by God to send out 12 spies, one from each tribe of Israel. They were chief men, men who *should* have been examples and a good influence on their tribes.

Num 13:1-3 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,  
2Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them.  
3And Moses by the commandment of the LORD sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men *were* heads of the children of Israel.

The instructions to the spies was actually very clear. They were supposed to go and bring back a report of what the land was like.

Num 13:17-20 And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this *way* southward, and go up into the mountain:  
18And see the land, what it *is*; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they *be* strong or weak, few or many;  
19And what the land *is* that they dwell in, whether it *be* good or bad; and what cities *they be* that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strong holds;  
20And what the land *is*, whether it *be* fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time *was* the time of the firstripe grapes.

Notice what they were to look for: how strong the people were, what the land was like, how many strongholds vs. nomadic tents there were, and how fruitful and wooded the land was. After forty days, they came back with their report. They had good news, and they had bad news.

Num 13:26-27 And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed

them the fruit of the land.

27 And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this *is* the fruit of it.

So far, so good. They said that the land was indeed very fruitful. They then pointed out the problems.

Num 13:28-29 Nevertheless the people *be* strong that dwell in the land, and the cities *are* walled, *and* very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

29 The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan.

Caleb, one of the spies, spoke up at that point to encourage the people in the mission they had been given by God.

Num 13:30 And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

It is at this point that things go wrong. Ten of the spies spoke out against what God had told them to do.

Num 13:31-33 But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they *are* stronger than we.

32 And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, *is* a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it *are* men of a great stature.

33 And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, *which come* of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.

The spies had lost sight of what *their* mission was and ended up taking Israel off their mission. The mission of the spies was *not* to evaluate *whether* they should go into the Promised Land, but *only* to gather information *about* the Promised Land. God had already given them the mandate to take over the land. It was not their responsibility to change God's plan, only to prepare the people for what they were going to face.

Not having a clear understanding of what our mission is and staying *on* mission is one of the most common problems that Christians and churches have. This is actually one of lessons I teach on church membership. People

have all kinds of notions about what a church is here for, but if our understanding of our mission is not right, all the other notions will render a church powerless and useless and will often lead ultimately to the destruction of the church if it does not repent.

Also, we each need to have a personal understanding of our Christian mission. Our homes suffer, our careers suffer, and our churches suffer because people are not clear on their whole purpose for living.

## 2. What our mission is not.

First, let me share with you some things that our mission is not.

- Our mission is not to dictate to others how to live their lives.

2Tim 2:24-26 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient,

25In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

26And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

You will often hear me quote this Scripture. Our job is not to make the world get saved. Our job is not to make our children spiritually successful. Our job is not to make the world a better place. Our job is to deliver the message of the Gospel. Our responsibility ends there. It is *their* responsibility to accept the message and change their lives by following and serving Jesus.

So many people are frustrated by the lack of response the lost world has to us. We certainly should do whatever we can to maximize the opportunity for someone to get saved. We certainly should do whatever we can to give our children every opportunity to learn and succeed. We should try to be as careful as possible, but the failures are not ours. When people fail to obey God, the failure is theirs.

- Some people think that it is their mission to find fault with the church.

This does not refer to giving advice about problems that need to be overcome to be successful. Sometimes you go into a program with certain expectations of losses that are acceptable. In the process of cleaning, you can't guarantee that something is not going to break. In purchasing things for a program or event, you might underestimate costs. Other times, there are some failures that you know you are going to have to accept in view of how important the successful the promising parts are.

However, in the course of pointing

out these problems, there are those who think if problems can be found then such plans should be rejected...*unless*, it is something *they* think should be done.

- Some people seem to think that it is their mission to find fault with people.

A good number of years ago we knew a teacher who actually said that it was her job to find the weaknesses and faults of the students, and she didn't say that in the context of how to adapt her plans to help students out.

Gal 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

- Some people seem to think that it is their mission to stir things up.

Years ago there was someone in church who would try to get people to argue in church because he felt that that was a sign that people were thinking. He would do this even if he and everyone was in total agreement about some decision.

Prov 16:27-28 An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips *there is* as a burning fire.

28A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.

As the Day of Pentecost drew on, the disciples were in one accord.

Acts 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Afterwards, the work of God *grew* because they were in one accord.

Acts 2:46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

Ps 133:1 Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity!

- Some people have their *own* mission in the church.

Sometimes people come with their own agenda for the church. They want programs for their kids, or they want their social needs met.

There are those who feel the mission of the church is to take care of their needs. I have to explain to them that people donate to the church to take care of the bills and carry out the Gospel mission of the church. I remember one time someone getting upset because I

didn't have time to fix his lamp. In actuality, I probably would have tried except I was sick at the time. He viewed this as a pastoral failure, though.

### 3. The mission of the church.

Oddly, our mission is not to pray, worship, teach the Bible, or a whole lot of other things. Now that might sound odd until I tell you that all these things are a *means* to *accomplish* our mission. They are not, by themselves, the objective or our mission.

Jesus spelled out our mission very clearly.

Luke 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Matthew 28:18-20 has been titled, The Great Commission.

Matt 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

The mission of the church is to win the lost. All the other parts of The Great Commission are there to repeat the mission of the church to win the lost. We preach and teach and pray in order to accomplish our mission: win the lost.

Our mission is not to redeem the culture. That would be a nice side effect, but it is not our mission. There is a false doctrine that our job is to fix the world so Jesus can finally come down to take His place on the throne. Our job is to get *people* redeemed and to *escape* the world and the judgment to come.

There is an illustration I love to use about this. I like to use it so you can have it to use also when you help others understand what the mission is. The fire chief came by one day to inspect the fire house. The firemen lined up and the chief questioned each one about their job. One man reported that his job was to shine the engine. Another to make sure the hoses were neat. Another, to make sure the siren worked. Another to make sure the ladders were secure. The chief had one thing to tell the men: NO, your job is to *put out the fire*. Certainly all those jobs had to be done...but the objective was to be able to put out the fire. All the jobs we have in church are part of leading souls to Christ.

### 4. Your personal mission.

Are you a believer? What is your

mission? Do you only pray to God to bless the agenda you have decided for yourself? "Lord, I've decided to be successful in a job that will make lots of money and keep me comfortable as I have to suffer in this world." Instead of asking to bless what *we* in our finite wisdom think good, we need to seek *His* will.

Prov 3:5-12 Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

6In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

7Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

8It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

9Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

10So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

11My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction:

12For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth.

If you discover something that is His will, follow it. Don't pray, "Lord, bless *my* agenda for life," but pray instead, "Lord, bless *Your* agenda and let me be a part of it."

People blaspheme when they pray what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer. Here is what it would sound like if people were honest:

My Father, which art far away and out of mind, hollow be Your Name. *My* kingdom come. *My* will be done on earth and you better hoe to and bless it or else I will hold it against you. Give me this day whatever I lust after and let me escape all consequences. And let's not mention my trespasses, that would make me feel bad and making someone feel bad is a sin. Help me to get even with anyone who offends me. For Thine is the power to make it all happen, and be glad that I give you any glory, for as long as you do what I want.

God gave us the church so we could do in an organized way what we are supposed to be doing in our personal life. Do we support God's work financially? We should be generous to others around us. Do we study God's Word in Sunday School and the other church services? We should be studying on our own. Do we come to church dinners? We should practice the ministry of hospitality. Do we pray together at prayer meeting? We should have a personal prayer time. By the way, all these things work in reverse,

too. Some people think that all you have to do are all these things and then you can skip church.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

Christ loved the church so much that He died for it. If Jesus loved the church, are we so much better than Him that we can turn up our nose at the church? People shouldn't feel free to excuse themselves because they don't like God's idea for them. Do you ever wonder if there had been someone in Egypt we have never heard of because he missed his opportunity to respond to the Lord's call? Instead, we have Moses who figured it out.

Heb 11:24-27 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

25Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

26Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

27By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

Our personal mission should complement the mission of the church. The objective of our life should be to bring people to salvation. What would have happened if some saint of the Lord couldn't be bothered to share the Gospel with you? What would have happened if there were the saints of God had not supported this ministry? (I can answer that question...this hallowed ground would have been a parking lot and there are bunch of us that would be on our way to Hell!) We must then ask the question, what will happen if we lose sight of our mission? This church could still become a parking lot and there will be many souls that might not hear the Gospel.

## 5. The consequences.

Num 14:6-10 And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, *which were* of them that searched the land, rent their clothes:

7And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, *is* an exceeding good land.

8If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

9Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they *are* bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD *is* with us: fear them not.

10But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

Moses begged God to not destroy the people. That was God's reaction. He would have raised up a mighty people from Moses to take their place. God hearkened to Moses, but there were consequences. All those who did not want to go into the Promised Land would truly not go in. They would be spared God's immediate judgment, but they would perish in the wilderness.

Num 14:28-35 Say unto them, *As truly as* I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:

29Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me,

30Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, *concerning* which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.

31But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.

32But *as for* you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness.

33And your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms, until your carcasses be wasted in the wilderness.

34After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, *even* forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, *even* forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.

35I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me: in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.

For each of the forty days they had a chance to observe the land of milk and honey, they would spend a year in the wilderness till all those of the age of maturity would have died off. Only Joshua and Caleb would be spared.

Don't shrink back from your mission. Your life will shrivel up before your eyes as you miss the opportunities that God has for you.



1. The spies lost sight of the mission.  
Num 13:1-3

Num 13:17-20

Num 13:26-27

Num 13:28-29

Num 13:30

Num 13:31-33

2. What our mission is not.

2Tim 2:24-26

Gal 6:1

Prov 16:27-28

Acts 2:1

Acts 2:46

Ps 133:1

3. The mission of the church.

Luke 19:10

Matt 28:18-20

4. Your personal mission. Prov 3:5-12

Eph 5:25

Heb 11:24-27

5. The consequences. Num 14:6-10

Num 14:28-35