

Sermon: Through the Wilderness: Defeating Victim Mentality

IN *Opportunities to connect and pray as a group*

1. When you hear the word 'rebel', who do you think of? Were you ever a 'rebel'? Against who/whom were you rebelling?
2. Pastor Ashwin described the 'wilderness experience' as a place of God-appointed testing and trial. It is a season of preparation for what God is about to do in your life.
When have you had a wilderness experience because of the choices of someone else? How did you deal with your 'victim mentality'?

UP *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

1. Make sure that your participants all understand the storyline of this section. Where were the Israelites when they listened to Moses speak? (Deut 1:1-46) What had happened over the past 40 years? Why?
Ask your participants to read excerpts from study Bibles that give background about this biblical period. Consult a map to understand where they had been and where they now stood.
2. Caleb is called the 'son of Jephunneh, the Kennizite.' (Josh 14:6) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caleb> What does that mean about his background? How is that important to this story?
3. It is noted 6x that Caleb 'follows me (God) wholeheartedly' (Num 14:24; 32:12; Dt 1:36; Josh 14:8, 9, 14)
What did this mean about Caleb? How would you describe him?
4. Pastor Ashwin quoted, 'The wilderness is a breeding ground for victim mentality.' What is a 'victim mentality'?
What was life like for Caleb during those 40 years? (Num 14:21-23)
What was he remembering? What was he thinking?
How was he preparing?
5. Note what section of land that Caleb received (Josh 14:6-12)
Why was it significant that this land be given to him?

OUT *Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community*

1. Pastor Ashwin said:
Caleb believed that the actions of others may affect you, but they don't have to define you.
Caleb knew the hurts and disappointments of the past don't have to dictate your future.
Caleb had a strong conviction that no external force can hinder what "God wants to do in and through your life."
Which of these statements speaks most directly to you at this time? Why?
2. How can the group pray for you as you walk through your wilderness?

UP – IN – OUT *reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).*

THE WORD (NIV)

Numbers 14:1-10a

That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. ²All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! ³Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" ⁴And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

⁵Then Moses and Aaron fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. ⁶Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes ⁷and said to the entire Israelite assembly, "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. ⁸If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. ⁹Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them." ¹⁰But the whole assembly talked about stoning them.

Joshua 14:6-12

Now the people of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know what the LORD said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. ⁷I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, ⁸but my fellow Israelites who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt in fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly. ⁹So on that day Moses swore to me, 'The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.' ¹⁰"Now then, just as the LORD promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the wilderness. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! ¹¹I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I'm just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. ¹²Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the LORD helping me, I will drive them out just as he said." ¹³Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as his inheritance. ¹⁴So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly. ¹⁵(Hebron used to be called Kiriath Arba after Arba, who was the greatest man among the Anakites.)

Sermon Study Summary

Through the ages, Christians have had a common experience - the wilderness. This theme runs through the Bible: among others, Abraham, Moses, David, and even Jesus spent time in the wilderness: a place of testing and trial, a season of preparation for what God is about to do in your life. God's way to the Promised Land was through the wilderness: this is still true today. This series talks about navigating the wilderness experiences of life to reach the destination God has for us. The Israelites caved in to their fears, refused to enter the land God promised them and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. We can end up in the wilderness because of our choices, but sometimes we end up there by the choices of others. This is harder to reckon with – we are victims who have been wronged; is it fair we are made to pay for others' offenses? How do we react when we suffer for no fault of ours: losing a loved one, being raised in a broken home, by a betrayal of trust, a painful divorce, or abuse that leaves deep scars? But while the pain and suffering are deep and legitimate, the wilderness is also a breeding ground for 'victim mentality'. As a child of God we must not fall into the trap of letting such feelings rob us of God's joy and purpose for our life. How do we defeat 'victim mentality' so that we can embrace the destiny God has for us? Look at the life of Caleb who did exactly that; suffering through no fault of his own, but then rising to do great things for God (Num 14:1-10a, Jos 14:6-12). There is little written regarding Caleb's life, but there are a few significant details. Caleb is the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite, a Gentile, yet they became part of the Israelite community and allowed to join the tribe of Judah. The Bible gives us a glimpse into three seasons of Caleb's life.

During the **first** season we see Caleb's deep and unwavering faith. Caleb had risen to the rank of a leader, and was 40 years old, in the prime of life, ready for challenges. When Moses selected one representative from each tribe to explore the land and bring back a report, Caleb was chosen from the tribe of Judah. All scouts came back with glowing reports of a good land, but 10 also reported major drawbacks: heavily fortified cities with impenetrable walls, powerful people, even giants! Caleb was the first to speak up to affirm his faith in God and His promises. If the Lord is pleased with us, He will lead us to the Promised Land and give it to us (Num 14:8). Israel's victory hinged on only one thing: on their obedience to God. Sadly, this season ends with the peoples' acceptance of the majority opinion. Their hearts melted in fear, and Israel made a great mistake. They chose not to believe the truth of God, and God pronounced judgement on the rebellious people: no one over the age of 20 years who disobeyed would live to see the Promised Land. But God also singled out Caleb with a promised reward for his wholehearted faith in God.

The **second** season of Caleb's life is one of complete anonymity. God was disciplining His people. The number of adults is estimated at approximately 1 million: this meant 25,000 deaths every year for 40 years, 66 every day. All they saw, including Caleb was death, funerals, suffering and weeping. Caleb suffered in other ways: no opportunity for visionary leadership, spiritual gifts on the shelf, stuck in one place and walking the same desert terrain over and over, watching the prime of his life go by, cheated of 40 years in the Promised Land. How did Caleb handle this? The Bible is silent on this, giving us no insight. Meanwhile, under Joshua's leadership, the 40 years pass and the new generation makes it to Canaan; wars were fought and victories won. Now it is time to distribute the land.

And Caleb shows up again for a final glimpse into the **third** and final season of his life. (Jos 14:6-9) Amazingly, it appears that after 45 years nothing about Caleb seems to have changed. Instead, he is even more passionate and determined for God. There is not a hint of complaint about the wandering years. Caleb stayed with God: knowing God was at work and keeping trust in God's purpose. Caleb now claims God's promise: give me the hill country around Hebron. 'Although I am 85 years old, I am just as vigorous as 45 years ago to go to battle against the fortified cities and the giants; with the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as He said' (Jos 14:10-12) and Caleb succeeds (Jos 15).

How did Caleb defeat a 'victim mentality'? Caleb had a good friend Joshua and a great leader Moses at his side. Caleb believed that the actions of others affect you, but they don't define you. Caleb knew that the disappointments and hurts of the past don't have to dictate your future. Caleb had a strong conviction that that no external force can hinder what God wants to do in and through your life. We have this same assurance today as God's children. When we place our faith in Jesus, the Bible says that we "are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Rom 8:37). Jesus takes those who are victims, pours His glory and strength into their lives, and turns victims into victors.

An example is the life of Fanny Crosby who wrote more than 9,000 hymns. As a sick six-week old baby, she received treatment from a man pretending to be a doctor, treatment that left her blind. Fanny had a case for claiming 'victim mentality;' instead she fell in love with God and discovered the gifts and talents God had given her.

Another way to defeat victim mentality is to live for a cause greater than yourself. Stop living a self-centered life and ask for a mountain, a divine assignment for God's purpose. We have no time to waste on self-pity. 85-year-old Caleb speaks to our generation: to those with faculties in good shape and retired from a formal career – now is not the time to rest, it is time to follow God wholeheartedly; your mission on earth is not over while you still breathe! Caleb also speaks to our youth – don't settle for the Canadian dream; instead, dare to dream big for God's Kingdom - of never growing weary of doing good, and remaining passionate for God for a lifetime. It's never too late; it's never too early!