

Caleb and Conquering Mountains

Jim Deason

Some of the most powerful and enduring lessons we learn were learned as children when we sat at the feet of a devoted sister in Bible class. The stories of the Bible came alive in our hearts as our imagination captured the scenes of Noah surviving the flood in an ark loaded with animals or David going forth to meet the giant of the Philistines armed only with a sling and five smooth stones. The story of Caleb is one of my favorites. It teaches us a valuable lesson about facing the mountains of our lives.

We are first introduced to Caleb in Numbers 13:6. He was one of the twelve spies chosen to spy out the land of Canaan. He faithfully encouraged his brethren, "We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it" (Num. 13:30). He believed in the power of God to deliver and fulfill His promises (Num. 14:6-9). Unfortunately, with the exception of Joshua, his fellow spies shared neither his courage nor his faith in God. As a result, Israel was condemned to wander in the wilderness.

Forty years and a new generation later, Israel entered and conquered Canaan. Caleb, at 85 years old, called upon Joshua to give him what God had already promised – the hill country of Hebron (Josh. 14:6-14).

The hill country of Hebron belonged to the sons of Anak. These were men of great size (Num. 13:33), renowned as warriors. They remind me of an old Jim Croce song, "You don't tug on Superman's cape, You don't spit into the wind, You don't pull the mask of the ole' Lone Ranger and you don't mess around with..." well, in this case, the sons of Anak" In spite of the formidable opposition, however, Caleb asked, "Joshua, give me the mountain? I'll take on the giants?" The mountains of Hebron and the giants that lived there represented a challenge to Caleb's faith.

Every man, sooner or later, will face his own mountain. Some of them will be formidable. They are not physical mounds of earth and they have no giants living on them but they are mountains nonetheless. Your mountain may come in the form of a personal weakness, possibly an addiction of some sort or a personal character trait that you need to change. It may be a difficult task that needs doing, perhaps sin that must be confronted in a friend. The exact nature of the mountains we face are as different as the people who face them.

Like Caleb, these mountains will be a challenge to your faith. Several very important character traits are necessary to face mountains.

1. You will need courage. Earlier in his life Caleb accepted the difficult assignment to engage in espionage (Num. 13). Such an assignment required a lot of nerve and the ability to stay cool under pressure. It involved taking a risk. Courage is not the absence of fear, but doing what you know to be right even in the face of fear. Caleb was up to the task which Moses assigned him. No mountain is ever conquered without the courage to climb.

2. You must take the initiative. Initiative is the action of taking the first step or move; taking responsibility. Caleb was the first to say, “Let’s take the giants.” It was Caleb who went to Joshua with his plan to take on the sons of Anak in Hebron. You will never conquer your giants without taking the first step to do so.

3. You must possess single-mindedness. Any worthwhile task requires focus and dedication to accomplish. Remember the words of Caleb, “I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land” (Josh. 14:8). Now, at eighty-five years old, Caleb is pleading, “...give me this hill country” (Josh.14:12). For *forty-five years* Caleb had his heart set on Hebron! That’s single-mindedness! Your world is filled with distractions that call you away from the mountains before you. Your mountain, however, will never be conquered, – your problems will remain unresolved – until you are able to remove those distractions and focus on the task at hand.

4. You must work with whole-heartedness. Of good king Hezekiah it was said, “Every work which he began in the service of the house of God... he did with all his heart” (2 Chron. 31:21). Caleb possessed the same spirit for he “followed the LORD God of Israel fully” (Josh. 14:14). Someone long forgotten once said, “It doesn’t take much of a man to be a Christian, but it takes all of him that there is.” God expects whole-hearted service and will be satisfied with nothing less. Whatever mountain you have to conquer will require all the effort that you can muster.

Someone said that “men are made in crisis.” That may be the case. If it is, we need to make sure we possess the same mountain-moving faith that Caleb exhibited (Matt. 21:21).