

ON THE BORDER

Having Faith To Work God's Plan

Joshua 14

Created by *Dale Ohmart*

Big Idea: *God has plans for us that are bigger than our imagination, but our active, obedient faith is essential for His plans to become reality.*

Welcome to LifeSpring and welcome to our new, temporary surroundings out here at the Hilton Hotel. As we begin today, I want to publicly mention how much I appreciate the staff here for all their work to serve our needs. For the past several weeks, we have had numerous conversations both in person and over the phone to work out the details. This is a first class facility, and I can recommend it without any hesitation at all if you ever need a place to hold a function.

Well, today begins a new and hopefully very brief chapter in our existence. We are here at the Hilton while we continue working on a more permanent solution to our need for space to build our ministry. Just like you, I'm looking forward to having a piece of real estate that can be available to us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week...a place that can be the physical structure that stands for our existence in the community.

But as I say that, I hear a mild alarm going off in the back of my head. One of the dangers we need to guard against is becoming overly dependant on buildings and property. When the church began in the first century, it didn't own property. That only came generations later. Jesus talk that the relationship God wants to have with us can't be contained in one physical location. God spoke to Moses from a burning bush. He spoke to a prophet named Balaam through a donkey. He sent visions to Daniel in the capital of an foreign nation.

See, God can speak to us in a school or in a hotel or anywhere He chooses. And we can lift up our praises to Him no matter whom we are with, or where we are, or what time it is.

So do you want to experience God's presence today? I said, do you want to experience God's presence here today?

PRAYER – Dear God of the burning bush and the talking donkey, sometimes it is difficult to recognize holy ground, even when we are standing in it. In the name of our Lord Jesus, we ask You this morning to fill this place with the power of Your presence. Light the fire of your Holy Spirit in our hearts. Let us hear the sound of Your voice, clear and unmistakable. Open our eyes to the path where you want us to walk. And may the glory of Your name radiate from this room and from our hearts into the surrounding communities and throughout this city...

SONGS

- *All Things Are Possible*
- *He Reigns*
- *Jesus You Are*

COMMUNION – *Lawson Byrd*

PRESENTATION

Ephesians 2:10

¹⁰*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (NIV¹)*

The surroundings here at the Hilton are certainly different than where we have been for the past four years. Like I said last week, we have so much to thank the school for...the people there were super, starting in the district office and all the way through the system to the custodial staff at Northview. I'm glad that Anna will still be at the school for the next couple of years so that we will continue to interact with those people.

Now, here we are at the Hilton. I think it's safe to say that the artwork on the walls here is just a bit more advanced than the artwork at the school. I don't think I have to worry about my shoes squeaking on this carpet like they did on the tile in the cafeteria. And the chairs! Compared to what you've been sitting on for the past four years, these must feel like recliners. Maybe we ought to start charging admission. My friends on the staff here at the hotel are very excited about a renovation that was recently completed throughout the entire facility. They spent a couple million dollars re-doing all the rooms, the halls, the front desk and the convention center. Not that the place was a dump before...they just felt it was time to update the look. I guess they must have known we were coming.

A facility like the Hilton doesn't just spring up out of the ground accidentally, does it. And when they decided to remodel, they didn't rip all the wallpaper off the walls and then start talking about what they wanted to do in its place. In the same way, a church doesn't just spring up out of nothingness accidentally. Long before you or I was ever born, God could see LifeSpring on the horizon. And as we sit here today, He knows both what we can become and what we will become as a church.

Did you hear how I said that? The sad fact is that potential often goes unrealized. Why does that happen? A more important question is, how can we make sure it doesn't happen to us. Let me suggest that the answer to a great extent is summarized in a single phrase...***see it through***. You might have the potential to become a hall-of-fame baseball player, but it won't happen if you quit the first time you strike out. You have to ***see it through***. You might have the potential to become the president of the United States, but it won't happen if you quit the first time you lose an election. You have to ***see it through***. You may have the potential to become a best selling author, but it will never happen if you quit writing after you get that first rejection letter.

A great example of a person who lived that principle out in real life is an Old Testament champion named Caleb. I can't remember if I mentioned his name last week, but I told you part of story. He was standing there with Joshua in **Numbers 13**, urging the people to believe that God was going to be on their side and would give them victory over the giants that lived in the land God had promised to give them. And that's the starting point of ***seeing it through***...

LET'S DREAM : Having God-shaped VISION .

We need to dream. We need to have vision.

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We probably all have dreams for the future. We dream about what our lives will be like. We dream about what the future holds for our kids. I hope you're dreaming about the future for this church and this ministry. I wonder how those dreams compare with God's dreams for us.

Recently, a camera crew hit the streets of a major city and interviewed several of the people they met on the sidewalk. As you listen to their conversation, you'll begin to get a picture of what these people are dreaming about for their future. The question they were answering was, *what would you do if you were God?*

VIDEO DVD – *What would you do if you were God?* (**E**ssentials For The On-Mission Church, vol. 4, no. 4)
Time = 2:20.

That's a pretty big question, isn't it. And I think the way people answer it does give us a little peep at the dreams they have for their lives.

If you would have taken a camera crew to the Israelites when they were wandering across the desert in the Old Testament, I wonder how they would have answered the question. I wonder what their dreams were. Probably, all of them were thinking about that land God had promised to give them. But when they got there, only two of them had a big enough imagination to believe that God could make the dream come true.

Approximately forty years later, these same two men stood together as conquerors of that land. Together, they had been leading their people in an invasion that was supposed to drive out the giants and the other civilizations that live there. The job wasn't quite done yet. And Caleb was still dreaming God-sized dreams.

Joshua 14

⁸ *...my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly....* ¹² *Now 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.* (NIV)

Try to paint an accurate picture of this conversation in your mind. At the age of 85, Caleb is asking Joshua to assign him to lead an assault on the large and fortified cities of the Anakites. That was the civilization that caused the hearts of the people to melt with fear. These were the giants! And Caleb wants the opportunity to take them on. He wants to finish the job he had started. He wants to "follow the Lord wholeheartedly." He wants to *see it through*.

Can you see yourself doing that at 85? I had a conversation one time with a man who was a lot younger...someone I have known since we moved here to Kansas City. We had talked several times before, so I felt it was about time to invite him to church. He told me that he and his wife were members of a church nearby, but they had done their part – taken their kids to Sunday school, even taught a class or two – but now their kids are grown and gone and so they didn't feel like they needed to be involved.

I've talked with other people who have that attitude, even people who are in church every week. But they're sitting back and relaxed, letting other in the church carry the ball. Or they want to go to a church that offers more for their family. The bottom line is that they don't want to go up against the giants in the land. They are content to peacefully co-exist, even though God's dream is to drive the giants out.

Every church – and especially a church like LifeSpring – needs to be filled with Calebs...men and women who are still ready to fight giants when they are 85...men and women who have rejected the word retirement from their vocabulary...men and women who aren't satisfied just to go to church, but want to build a movement that will send powerful ripples of change through the community...men and women who have allowed God to shape their dreams and their vision.

LET'S DETERMINE : Having God-shaped PLANS .

Once the dream has been shaped, it's necessary to determine the plan. Driving out giants doesn't happen accidentally or naturally. The giants like where they are. The Bible doesn't tell us exactly what Caleb's plan was, but I have complete confidence that he had one.

Recently, I have been feeling very convicted about the lack of planning in my own life. I wonder how much of our ministry has been undermined by that failure. Some people think that strategic planning contradicts the places in the Bible where it talks about being led by God's Spirit. But the Bible is filled with hints that suggest God is the greatest strategic planner of all time. For example, look what He said to a prophet in the Old Testament named Jeremiah...

Jeremiah 1:5

⁵ *"I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my spokesman to the world."* (NLT)

Evidently, God had a plan for Jeremiah's life. Of course, Jeremiah had to decide whether or not he was going to cooperate with that plan. But it was there. And there are other places in the Bible where we can find statements that suggest just how elaborate and detailed God's plan is. He told Abraham that He was planning to bless the entire world through one of Abraham's descendants. He told King David that his family line would be kings forever. We read in the New Testament that God had a plan for the salvation of the world all worked out before creation even began.

This summer, we are going to nurture the planning process in our ministry. And a good starting place is the visitor's day that is listed in your program. I have a plan that has almost unlimited potential to make that day unforgettable. It isn't just going to happen...we all need to be involved in working this plan out. The extent of our success depends on how much effort you are willing to invest in this process.

The starting point is to create a mailing list. This week, I challenge you to write down the names and addresses of twenty families that you plan to invite to our visitors' day. Yes, I said twenty. And yes, I expect it will take some time to identify the people to invite. But isn't it worth some time? I've already started building my list. I don't have twenty yet, but I added another name the other day...I think God Himself may have prompted me to think about this family. And I believe God will help YOU, too. My list has the names of a couple of neighbors. There are a couple of families who have kids that are friends of my kids, and some business contacts I have.

If you have a cell phone, take it out right now and hold it up. Now, open up the file that has all the names and phone numbers you have stored. Mine has almost seventy. I know that most of the people either go to church already or they live out of town. But I'll bet you can find a few names in the list you are looking at right now that you can add to your mailing list for visitor's day. You'll find a few more when you look through your PDA or your address book.

Don't worry right now about what you are going to send those people or how you are going to invite them...I'll take care of that over the next couple of weeks. For now, concentrate on building that list of twenty names. Then, next Sunday, bring it with you and I'll tell you the next thing we are going to do together.

LET'S DO IT : Having God-shaped ACTION .

And ultimately, that's what it comes down to. Are we going to DO IT? Are we going to take ACTION? The most exciting and inspiring dream is useless until we do something about making it come true. The best plan in the world is useless until it is translated into action.

I said earlier that the Bible doesn't go into very much detail about the plan Caleb had for defeating the giants. Characteristically, the Bible keeps the focus on the action.

Joshua 14

¹⁴ So Hebron has belonged to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite ever since, because he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly. (NIV)

I want to highlight a phrase there. Caleb followed the Lord WHOLEHEARTEDLY. Circle that word in your notes there and then go back up to verse 8...circle the word WHOLEHEARTEDLY in that verse. Spend a few seconds in the shadow of that word. It's the idea I've mentioned as the key closing the gap between what we can become and what we will become. Let me say that another way. The more WHOLEHEARTEDLY we follow the Lord, the more we WILL become what we CAN become. But that word is a giant word, and I don't want to treat it lightly. What does it mean to follow WHOLEHEARTEDLY? What does it mean to *see it through*?

First, I think it means we understand the ultimate return on our action is not guaranteed. Caleb hints at that in verse 12...he'll drive out the giants, assuming the Lord is with him. The attitude is even more obvious later on in the Bible in the book of **Daniel**. Three young men are being threatened because they refused to worship the golden statue of the king. The king can't believe that they would refuse in the face of certain death...in this case, death by being thrown into a furnace of fire. And I love the answer that these three brave young men gave to the king...

Daniel 3:17-18

¹⁷ ...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire.... ¹⁸ But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods... (NIV)

That's the attitude I'm talking about...the *see it through* attitude. The attitude that God is using our efforts to accomplish His purpose even when the results we get don't match the results we have anticipated. And so we keep doing it...we study the situation, adjust the plan and go to work all over again.

That's another element of following WHOLEHEARTEDLY. The determination to persist.

Proverbs 24:16

...for though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again... (NIV)

CONCLUSION

When they registered for the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary, the Jamaican bobsled team was the laughingstock of the international community. They came from a country where it never snows! And if Disney's movie about them is accurate, they didn't even have a sled when they arrived in Calgary. They had to overcome ridicule, the reputation of their coach, rule-changes that were contrived specifically to keep them from competing...they had to overcome the intimidation of teams that had decades of tradition...they had to overcome their own inexperience. Their first run down the hill is the worst joke of all. It seemed like they didn't belong after all. But as the movie builds to a climax, the stubborn Jamaicans begin to earn a little respect. On their final run down the hill, a malfunction in their sled causes a terrifying crash. The crowd holds its breath while emergency teams race toward the spot where the sled lies motionless.

Slowly, the team regains its senses and before the emergency teams arrive, those four pioneers lifted the sled up onto their shoulders and carried across the finish line. And the world cheers.

Vision...strategic planning...action in spite of adversity – if the Jamaican bobsled team can have those qualities, LifeSpring can, too. And we have so much more reason. God has made a promise to us, similar to the promise He gave to Caleb and Joshua and the Israelites. To them, He promised a land. Oh sure, they had to chase a few giants out before they could move in, but He promised to give them victory no matter how impossible it may have seemed. To us, God has promised that He will build His church. Oh sure, we may have to overcome a few giants along the way. But Jesus has promised to be with us, and the gates of hell will not prevail against us.

What's keeping us from dreaming God's dream, determining God's plan, and doing it? I'm ready to go across the border. I'm in all the way...all my love, all my hope, all my strength, all my physical resources...I'm ready to pour everything I've got into the battle. Who's ready to go with me?