

BROKEN VESSELS

HOW GOD USES ORDINARY PEOPLE

Caleb – Finishing Well

August 6, 2023

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 1 Corinthians 9:24 (ESV)

For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. Hebrews 3:14 (ESV)

1. Meet Caleb

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, Genesis 15:18–19 (ESV)

2. What can we learn about finishing well from Caleb’s early years?

At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, “We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan.” But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.” Then the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are.” So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, “The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to

ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”
Numbers 13:25–33 (ESV)

But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.” Numbers 13:30 (ESV)

A. Finishing well comes when we remember the faithfulness of the God who loves us, not the size of the problems in front of us.

And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, “The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.” Numbers 14:6–9 (ESV)

Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 1 John 4:4 (ESV)

B. Finishing well comes from thinking for yourself, not following the crowd.

(Caleb speaking) ... And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.” Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones...
Numbers 14:9–10 (ESV)

3. What can we learn about finishing well from Caleb’s middle years?

A. Finishing well means not absorbing the bad attitudes around us.

And Moses was very angry and said to the Lord, “Do not respect their offering. I have not taken one donkey from them, and I have not harmed one of them.”
Numbers 16:15 (ESV)

But on the next day all the congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and against Aaron, saying, “You have killed the people of the Lord.” Numbers 16:41 (ESV)

Now there was no water for the congregation. And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Would that we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord!” Numbers 20:2–3 (ESV)

“Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water. So you shall bring water out of the rock for them and give drink to the congregation and their cattle.”
Numbers 20:8 (ESV)

Then Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?” And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their livestock. And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe in me, to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.”
Numbers 20:10–12 (ESV)

B. Finishing well means drawing closer to God in times of suffering.

And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness. Numbers 14:33 (ESV)

Though he slay me, I will hope in him;... Job 13:15 (ESV)

4. What can we learn about finishing well from Caleb’s senior years?

Then the people of Judah came to Joshua at Gilgal. And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, “You know what the LORD said to Moses the man of God in Kadesh-barnea concerning you and me. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought him word again as it was in my heart. But my brothers who went up with me made the heart of the people melt; yet I wholly followed the LORD my God. And Moses swore on that day, saying, ‘Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God.’ And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, just as he said, these forty-five years since the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, while Israel walked in the wilderness. And now, behold, I am this day eighty-five years old. I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming. So now give me this hill country of which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said.” Then Joshua blessed him, and he gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance. Therefore Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite to this day, because he wholly followed the LORD, the God of Israel.
Joshua 14:6–14 (ESV)

A. Finishing well comes from following the Lord wholeheartedly.

But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it. Numbers 14:24 (ESV)

...except Caleb the son of Jephunneh. He shall see it, and to him and to his children I will give the land on which he has trodden, because he has wholly followed the LORD!' Deuteronomy 1:36 (ESV)

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Psalm 16:11 (ESV)

B. Finishing well comes from staying involved in the mission.

Conclusion

Life Group Questions

1. Pastor Kurt shared stories of Bible characters who started following God well but finished poorly (Saul, Judas) and those who started timidly but finished strong (Nicodemus.) He also shared the stories of Bible characters who started strong and stumbled but recovered (David, Peter.) The epitaph on the tombstone of Pastor Kurt's great, great, great, great grandfather was a real-life example of someone who started strong for Christ and finished well. What real-life stories of faithfulness or failure in people's life most impact you?
2. **Read Numbers 13:25-33.** Most spies and the people fixed their eyes on the size of the giants in front of them instead of the faithfulness of the God who loved them. Do you find yourself acting more like the ten spies or Caleb? How does knowing God's faithfulness to us in the past help change the way we face overwhelming problems? See Acts 9:26-27. Barnabas encouraged people by opening his heart and life to Paul when others avoided him. Who are the outcasts at CrossWinds? How can we be like Barnabas and open our lives to welcome them?
3. **Read Numbers 14:9-10.** Caleb faced peer pressure to conform his thinking and words to the majority opinion. Why is learning to withstand the crowd's pressure essential to finish well? How can we prepare to stand strong against the values of the world?
4. Moses was so discouraged by the grumbling and whining of the people it led him to anger and sin, which kept him out of the Promised Land. It appears Caleb was able to successfully avoid absorbing the negative attitudes around him. How can we keep our thoughts fixed on Jesus and not be overwhelmed with frustration and anger?
5. God describes the forty years of wilderness wanderings as a time of suffering for his people. In mid-life, we will face times of suffering, some of which is beyond what we can bare (like the Willis family.) How can we face that suffering so it draws us closer to God instead of pulling us away?
6. Caleb is repeatedly described as a man that wholeheartedly followed God. What does it look like to half-heartedly follow God? Why do so many people think half-hearted devotion to Jesus is better than living fully devoted to Jesus?