

THE TEN SPIES - "The "The Corrosive Power Of Negativism"



“Building Blocks”

1. **(Intro)** In a very real sense, we are “in” the Book of Numbers right now as believers—somewhere between Egypt and Canaan. This is the argument of the writer of Hebrews in chapter 3 regarding the “rest” of God and why the Israelites didn’t obtain it. Grumbling is a very big deal to Yahweh. Paul refers to this very incident in 1 Corinthians 10, in his attempt to address this attitude. It’s *not* merely an “Old Testament story.”
2. **(Q1)** This is a very powerful story. Twelve men who had an identical experience (or at least similar, if they split-up), yet arrived at polar opposite conclusions and plans of action. Later Yahweh calls this a “different spirit,” when contrasting Caleb and Joshua to the rest (cf. 14:24).
The Hebrew verbs in Caleb’s statement in vs 30 carry with them the notion of sustained, but pre-*vailing* effort, *and* the displacement of the residents of Canaan.
3. **(Q3-13:1-2)** These men were all *nasi* (Hebrew), chiefs within their tribes. This word is a word of notoriety and importance. It is sometimes translated, “sheik,” “prince,” “exalted one.” These were *not* volunteers or the National Guard. They were the equivalent of a Navy SEAL special ops team!
4. **(Q4)** Our Edenic nature makes “grumbling and complaining” our second language. Both Adam and Eve complained to God in their response to his inquiry, “What have you done?” in regard to the fiasco with the fruit.
5. **(Q5-Hebrews)** It is interesting that bitterness is the result of “failing to obtain the grace of God.” The metaphor of the “race” in the early verses of this chapter is still in the mind of the author as he/she writes this verse. *Husterōn*, the Greek word translated “obtain” has to do with “arriving late,” or being “left behind,” or “failing to finish” a race. The idea here is that of purpose. Grace isn’t always at the “front end” of the struggle and empowering us to finish. It’s often at the “tail end” of the struggle, enabling us not to quit. We fail to obtain grace we need because we quit early. This is consistent with what was already said in 12:1-3, especially verse 3.
6. **(Q6)** If we truly are “born” to complain, then its *absence* in circumstances where it would be expected, can set me apart in the eyes of those outside the Kingdom.



“Stumbling Stones”

1. **(Background)** The mention of the Nephilim in 13:33 is a reference to an extremely difficult description of sexual relations between the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” in Genesis 6:4. Scholars are disagreed on *who* the “sons of God” actually are. Contextually, if they are spirit beings, they certainly are *not* angels loyal to Yahweh. What we *do* know is that this occurred at a time of great evil in the world, and the offspring, the Nephilim (“fallen ones”) were giants. Goliath was apparently in this line of men.
2. **(Q1)** I think it is reasonable to assume that *both* groups believed the residents of Canaan were stronger than them, not just those in the “majority report.” Caleb believed it too. He saw them! But, it is also fair to believe that Caleb knew that Yahweh was stronger than the Canaanites *and* the sons of

Anak. This is what made the “minority report” different and truer to reality. Not that the “minority” group simply had blind faith and the “majority group” didn’t.

3. **(Q3-14:1)** Be careful not to jump to conclusions about this decision. It was certainly wrong and had devastating consequences. But, remind yourself that *everything* we know about Caleb and Joshua is hindsight. And, 83% of the “recon team” brought back the same report! They all agreed on the futility of the mission. And, these were 10 of the most qualified men in the nation, and everyone knew it. I suspect we would have dismissed Caleb and Joshua as unrealistic and reckless had we been there. We know how the Story went, no one else did.
4. **(Q5-Deut)** This is a tough principle of leadership. A wise leader will not allow negativism to infect a group, a team, or an organization. Confrontation must be followed by “quarantine,” either voluntary or forced.



“Going Deeper”

1. **(Q3)** When in your own life has God led you in a fashion contrary to the “majority report”? What was it like?
1. **(Q5)** Ask individuals to share their “one central truth” for each of the six passages in this question.
- 2.
3. **(Q7)** Have each group member pick one item off their checked items on the list on pages 68-69, and share it.
4. **(Q8)** Ask if anyone in the group did this question.