

INTRO:

PAUSE FOR TECH LEADER... Good morning Hub. Happy Memorial Day Weekend...I HOPE this will be one of the last times we gather virtually like this!...BECAUSE, in-part today, I wanna talk to you about next steps for **RE-BOOTING** our in-person Sunday Gatherings. HOWEVER I wanna frame that conversation in the context of our passage today, because I really think it speaks to the posture we'll need, as we think about gathering and inviting others to gather with us. SO if you have a Bible/Bible App and I hope you do, turn to the book of **Numbers**: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus...**Numbers!** We're continuing our "**True Myth**" series today and looking at the distinction **Numbers** holds out between two things: **Courage...and Fear! Courage and Fear...** The philosopher Aristotle said that "*courage is the most important of all the virtues,*" BECAUSE he said, without courage we'd never persist in any of the OTHER virtues. C.S. Lewis clarified that saying, "*Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at its testing point.*"¹ So courage is: When you love even when it's unpopular... When you serve even when it's inconvenient... When you do what's right though it costs you/It's when you continue to commit and participate even when you feel vulnerable...It's when you give though you're strapped. That's courage!...And not only is it, I'd say, **DESPERATELY** needed in a world that feels like it's becoming more-and-more fearful by the day/at least if you watch any kind of cable news; BUT it's exactly what we're gonna need as we move to **reboot** our Sunday Gatherings. I heard someone say they felt like this last year we just turned off society... like you'd turn off a water spicket. And now we're just turning it back on it, and basically all hoping we don't get awkwardly blasted in the face. It's a good analogy right? Cuz I think that's how MOST of us are feeling, especially as we consider **re-booting** Sunday Gatherings. I mean we haven't met in-person/at least not on a consistent basis in over a year. So there's bound to be awkwardness. Some of you became a part of Hub DURING this last year and as a result haven't even met many others in the church. All of us are still navigating the, do we do handshakes? Like is that still a thing? Can I hug or does that just make me a weirdo? There's bound to be awkwardness...Even more, bound to be hesitancy. Recently the New York Times published an article entitled "*There's a Name for that Blah You're Feeling*" and it went on to name that feeling as "languishing" - this emotion that MANY are feeling these days/maybe you're feeling, where, ya know you're not burnt-out, cuz you still have energy; and you're not depressed, cuz you're still hopeful about some things, but you're just joyless, aimless hesitant to step into anything.² We're feelin' it. And so we're gonna need courage to begin and then COMMIT to re-gathering in-person among other things!...So let's hear the reading of God's word from **Numbers** and then look at what it tells us about **Courage and Fear**. **Tanya S. Intro's Self > Numbers 13:1-3,17-21, 25-32;14:1-12,20-24,34.....**

CONTEXT:

Thanks **Tanya**...So since we're jumping into the middle of the book here, let's remind ourselves of what we've seen: **First**, in **Genesis**, which you recall means "beginnings," we SAW the beginnings of the world, as originating from a powerful yet personal triune God. We saw the

¹ Quotes from "Courage in Babylon" // Daniel 3:1-29 // Shining in Babylon #3 - J.D. Greear

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/19/well/mind/covid-mental-health-languishing.html>

beginnings of humanity as God created, male and female in His image. We saw the beginnings of sin, brokenness and injustice as rooted in our desire to live for ourselves and just not take God at His word...But then we also saw the beginnings of God's GRACIOUS plan to save us FROM ourselves and FOR Him/as a part of a family who'll love, honor and rule with Him forever; a family that started with Abraham, grew into the 12 Tribes of Israel and ultimately became the nation OF Israel, as the first proprietors of God's message of salvation to the world... **Then** in **Exodus**, we saw how this gracious God POWERFULLY freed His people from 400 years of Egyptian slavery and lead them toward the land He'd promised Abraham/the Promise Land...So if Genesis was all about beginnings, Exodus was all about God as being both good and great!... **And Then** 2 weeks ago we saw in **Leviticus**, that if God IS both good and great; it raises a question: How do WE in our not so good'ness/not so greatness approach/have relationship with Him as we're created to do? And we saw the answer being in God graciously establishing a system, whereby His people could have their guilt and sin atoned for!...That's what we've seen.

TEXT:

So when you get to **Numbers** here, Israel is on the brink of entering the Promised Land. It says, *"The LORD spoke to Moses, 'Send men to spy the land of Canaan, which I'm giving to the people of Israel. From each tribe...you shall send a man...a chief among them.'*" Now catch the scene here: The Israelites are told to send out their best...to spy the land that they've been waiting to inhabit for over 400 years...a land/a promise, you understand, that'd literally defined them as a people. It's really hard for us to grasp the significance of this, cuz there's not many promises that define us/certainly as a people. The only analogy I could think of is that of an ad campaign Disney released a number of years ago where they just showed clips of different parents and caregivers telling children that they were finally going to Disney World. And then watching the kids cry, jump, just freak out, cuz of course this was the day, they'd been waiting for for years...That's the Israelites but to the extreme, cuz we're not talking about parents telling their kids that one day they'd get to VISIT a magical land. We're talking about great-great-great grandfathers telling their kids, who told their kids, who told their kids, going back 400+ years about a glorious land that they'd one day INHABIT. And so when this special ops. team is sent out spy the land and bring back a report, we're talking about the greatest "Big Reveal" in the history of "big reveals." HGTV eat your heart out!³

And so it says, **vv.17-21** and **25-27**, that at the end of 40 days, the spies return, bringing back word...here it comes: The land *"flows with milk and honey!"* More glorious than they could've ever imagined! It's like every time Abby and I drive through Brookline and see the "milk and honey" that is parking spaces, manicured lawns, anything other than a nail salon!...It was amazing, because of course when God promises to bless you, it's always amazing!...BUT there's one hiccup: The spies, you see, ALSO report that the land is inhabited by *"strong people"* with *"fortified cities"* - the *"Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites, Canaanites"* and even the *"descendants of Anak"*, which literally means "long-necked people"/a sort of giant-folk, who are obviously more militarily advanced than Israel. Cuz remember, Israel's never had to fight.

³ Disney and HGTV illustrations adapted from <https://dentonbible.org/sermon/defining-moments-driven-by-fear-or-trusting-in-gods/>

There's no verse prior to Numbers in which God tells Israel how to craft weapons, or build-out a battle plan, or even practice a war-game. No!...So even though God's promised them the land, they're looking at this fortified people, and needing courage - needing to take God at His word!... ***Where do you need to take God at His word today?*** Reaching out to a neighbor, co-worker, classmate to share your faith even though you know it could be awkward? How about taking a courageous stand at work, even though it'll cost you in the short run? What about calling that estranged family member, even though you aren't sure how they'll respond to you asking-for or offering forgiveness? Maybe it's a financial gift or to actually start tithing that God's put on your heart, but it scares you to death! How about starting or supporting a ministry/even just really committing to being an active contributor rather than consumer here at Hub? Or maybe it's confessing some sin to a trusted friend/member of your Missional Family/DNA Group, even though you'd rather keep it concealed. Where do you need courage and to take God at His word?

Keep going. It says **vv.31-32**, that unfortunately, instead of stepping out in courage, the people begin to fear, because the spies, it says, *"brought to them a bad report saying, 'The land...is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people are of great height... We're not able to go up against em; they're stronger than we are.'"* And so, despite Caleb/who was one of the spies, pleading with the people to trust God and occupy the land anyway, since He'd promised it to em, the people it says in **14:1-4** cried, complained and quit. Even said, *"We wished we had died in Egypt...or this wilderness...since we're gonna die by 'the sword' anyway. So let's get a new leader/new Pastor and go back to Egypt."* And I don't mean to get overly personal here, but I can sympathize with Moses a bit, as he pleads with the people in **vv.5-10** to not forsake trusting and obeying God/to not let their feelings direct their faith. But instead let their faith direct their feelings. ***Cuz that's always the battle right?***...There's a great illustration of this I've shared with you before by the late Chinese Missionary Watchman Nee.⁴ He talks about our lives being a combination of 3 "persons" as he calls em/the persons of Fact, Faith and Feeling. And he says, imagine Fact, Faith, and Feeling are all walking together on a tall, slender wall. Fact always goes first in line, cuz of course he's Fact. He leads everybody else. Faith always follows Fact. *Hebrews 11:1* says, *"faith is the substance of things hoped for."* So Faith trusts in what it knows/ Fact...Feeling always pulls up the rear. He follows Faith, because of course if you let your feelings lead, your life'll en up looking like an EKG chart - just all over the place. So Fact, Faith then Feelings! But of course, he says, problems come when Feeling tries to get in front of Faith on the wall. He starts gettin' anxious back there and tries to jump Faith in line. But the minute he does, Faith, thinkin' he's gonna fall, stops looking ahead at Fact and starts looking back at Feeling in order to get his footing...And Nee's point is: when you let your Feelings lead your Faith, your Faith always stumbles, cuz you're feelings are fickle and tend NOT to focus on Facts objectively. So the key is: to NOT Feel your way into your Faith, but Faith your way into your Feelings, which we do by grounding our Faith in the Facts - the promises of God! That's what Israel needed to do/God had promised them the land. The battle was already won. All they needed to do was receive the promise. But INSTEAD, they let their feelings/their fear lead! So that sadly, you see, the Lord judges em: First promising to disinherit and even kill em, but then

⁴ Illustration from listening to sermon: <https://www.summitrdu.com/wp-content/uploads/sermons/2017/09/Genesis-37-50-1f.pdf>

after Moses intercedes, simply keeping those who were fearful from ever entering the land/ they'd instead wander the wilderness for 40 years, as a symbol of the 40 days in which they'd spied the land AND until they've died off and a new generation can take the land - which by-the-way is the book of **Deuter...onomy** - literally, Deut + Nomos/ "second law" or second chance.

God judges em for it. And you say, "*why so severely?*" And it was severe, cuz understand, we're talking about approximately 2 million Israelites, who instead of entering the land will ALL/with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, die in the wilderness over the next 40 years. Now, I'm no math major but that's about 137 deaths a day. Why so severe?...It's because the people's fear; it wasn't just a personality flaw, like I think we sometimes think about it. No, it was a denial of the goodness and greatness of God. God had shown His greatness in things like the Passover and Exodus. And THEN His goodness in things like the Day of Atonement. But instead of simply trusting God on the basis OF those facts, Israel trusted their FEELINGS instead. Began believing that God was either NOT good enough to be willing to give em the land OR not great enough to be ABLE to give it to em. It was a rejection of the very character and competency of God/a kind of rebellious faithlessness...which is WHY, you see in **v.11**, God says to Moses, "*How long will this people despise me and not believe in me, in spite of all the signs that I've done among em?*" Friend, God equates your fear and mine/our lack of courage not to a personality flaw, but to "despising" Him/literally rebelling against Him and refusing to see and honor Him as He is!... Israel on the brink of the promise land, but instead of **courageously** stepping into it, they **fearfully** and severely back away from it! That's the story.

APPLICATION:

So let's pull all this together. What do we learn about Courage and Fear? Two things: **First**, the **Source** of it: And by "it," I mean of BOTH courage and fear. Because really what this story shows us is that both are rooted in EITHER being IN or OUT-of-touch with ultimate reality. Cuz look again at the responses of both parties. The people get word about the land and they say, "*We're not able to go in... We're gonna fall by the sword?... We should go back to Egypt?*" But Caleb and Joshua say, "*No! Let's go up and occupy it...It's a good land and if the LORD delights in us, He'll give it to us.*" ...You see the difference? It's not that Caleb and Joshua were just courageous while everyone else was a coward, cuz ya know they were born with it. No! It's that they were in-touch with ultimate reality/God's reality, while the people were out of touch with it, which is to say, the people were afraid because they were giving more weight to enemies in the land than to God...See whenever you're afraid, anxious, or just unable to be courageous in some way, it's NOT because you don't have the personality or makeup; a lot of people don't have the makeup and yet still live with immense courage. It's because, as Tim Keller says, "*you're giving more weight to that thing, that circumstance, that predicament...that feeling...than you are God. You're saying, 'God is small and that is big!'*"⁵ That's the source of fear...and on the flip-side, courage too, because when you give GOD more weight than anything else, cuz you understand as **Colossians 1** says, that He sustains and holds all things together and as Jesus said in **Matthew 6** is willing and able to care for you even more than the birds and the flowers, THEN you begin

⁵ "FEAR, FAITH, AND COURAGE - Growth in Christ, Part 2—May 20, 1990 - Numbers 13–14" - Tim Keller

to see that you have nothing to be afraid of. The source of both fear and courage is being IN or OUT-of-touch with ultimate reality! ***Where are you leaning today?***

So what's the **Solution**? And this is gonna sound trite, but it's important. The Solution is: to think! Think! When a person's out of touch with reality and assuming they have the ability to get back IN touch with it, how do they do it? How do counselors, therapists, physicians counsel you to do it? They don't tell you just buck up and be courageous right/at least not good ones. No! That can actually make things worse. They tell you to get underneath your fears by thinking. Why is it that you're afraid? What are you clinging to? What's serving as a kind of life-raft for you, such that if you don't have it you worry you're gonna sink. They get you to think right? Thinking will get rid of the fear. Because fear is actually the absence of true thinking.⁶ The reason Joshua and Caleb were able to be courageous is because they were thinking. And not just, "thoughts and prayers"/"good vibes"/"positive spin", but thinking specifically and accurately about God. Or another way to say it is: They were taking God at His word! BELIEVING Him to be who He's declared and demonstrated Himself to be! THAT'S how they're able to be courageous. Cuz when you see who God is/and even more how He's provided for and ultimately saved you, it's almost impossible to be afraid. It's like God's saying, "*Israel, if you realized what a miracle it was that you got out of Egypt, then there's no way you'd be scared of going into Canaan. If you're afraid I'm gonna let you sink now, then you've forgotten who I am and the miracle of your salvation.*" ...***Is that you?***

If so/maybe like many of us AND you're willing to admit it, then Friend I've got some really good news for you: Your fear and mine/our inability to be courageous/take God at His word and the punishment we deserve FOR that, is EXACTLY why God intervened through Jesus Christ... Cuz you understand, Jesus Christ wasn't just courageous! He was perfectly courageous IN YOUR PLACE! HE was the one who left the land YOU and I were created for... came into enemy territory... and fought a decisive battle on the Cross - like an even better Caleb and Joshua, HE perfectly trusted God, and drank the cup of His Father's wrath, so that instead of you and i having to bear that wrath and be kicked out of the land, WE might be blessed and brought back into the Father's love, grace and presence forever... AND THEN like one of the spies, who came back from the land with fruit as proof for the people, Jesus rose from the dead, as ***1 Corinthians 15*** says, as a kind of "*firstfruits*" proof for us.⁷... You see? Jesus isn't just an example of courage for you to try and follow - That'd be a crushing example. No! He's the one who courageously stood in your place/fought the battle on your behalf and walked out of the grave a victor... so that the only thing left for you and me to do is simply receive that. Cuz friend, when you do/when you THINK about and really take that in, it does/it begins to fill you with courage NOT because you told yourself to be courageous or not fearful, but because you realize, as the Apostle Paul said in ***Romans 8:32***, that "***If God gave (you) His only Son. How then will He (not) give (you) all things with him?***" If God didn't spare even Jesus to save YOU, why are you fearing that He'll spare something now - EITHER send you something that's not necessary

⁶ Insight about nature of fear from "FEAR, FAITH, AND COURAGE - Growth in Christ, Part 2—May 20, 1990 - Numbers 13–14" - Tim Keller

⁷ Connection to Jesus adapted from <https://summitchurch.com/GetFile.ashx?Guid=7bdc9468-90ce-422f-b83d-ad84b03d01b3>

OR withhold something that is? It's like we sang earlier: *"HE'S our courage when we worry in the dead of night. HE'S our strength cuz we're not strong enough to win the fight. And so no power can come against you cuz He's already overcome. And no darkness can overwhelm you cuz He's already won!"* Just like God had already blessed and promised the land to Israel, so too He's already blessed and promised to give you all things with Christ. All you have to do is believe and step forward into it!... ***Have you received by faith what Christ has done for you? And are you believing/thinking on it, so that it's dispelling your worry and fear where you need it to?*** ... Take a moment to consider that...

APPLICATION:

Typically, at this time we break-off into discussion groups for further application, but if it's ok, I'd like to do something slightly different today. I'd like for us to spend the next few minutes in prayer all together. As I mentioned in the beginning, as we consider ***re-booting*** in-person Sunday Gatherings, I really do think we're gonna need a posture of courage and just taking God at His word together, because what we sense God inviting us into, in this next season of life as church, is a kind of two-step approach to gathering. First to ***Re-Boot*** our in-person Sunday Gatherings and then to ultimately ***Re-Launch*** them. Think about it like a laptop that's been turned off for awhile. First you wanna re-boot and get it up-n-running right? But then you probably need to re-launch it with some upgrades and such. That's kinda how we think we need to approach in-person Sunday Gatherings. SO... Starting in **2 WEEKS**... on **JUNE 16TH**... and then going **EVERY-OTHER-SUNDAY**... through **THE SUMMER** it's all gonna be about re-booting/just re-establishing an in-person rhythm of meeting and worshipping the Lord together. And as much as we can, we're gonna do that enjoying the outdoors - we'll post locations online - but too in just low-key, ***family-reunion style*** ways that are faithful to what it means for the church to gather; So Praying, Singing from a single guitar or if we don't have that, a screen, Teaching from the Scriptures, Discussion/encouraging one another, etc. So think about this summer as just being a time for ALL of us to, together, make Sunday Gatherings more about ***participation than consumption/engagement more than entertainment*** - like in a family. - SO THAT, in the Fall, we can build on that with some "upgrades" in things like where, how, and how often we gather that I believe'll REALLY position us to just enjoy gathering and inviting neighbors to gather with us moving forward, BECAUSE when we do, it'll all be about simply letting the Lord grow in us a deeper/more ***joyful dependency*** on Him - willingness and ability to take Him at His word... So here's what I need from you starting right now: I need you to pray! Specifically, I want us to pray about 3 things:

- **1)** That God would continue to give ***Myself, Ed Spence*** and ***Matt King***, who of course have been faithfully leading in the church for some time now, but who've been invited to consider becoming your Elders, starting with a season we're calling an "Elder Candidacy Phase"/pray for us to really hear clearly from the Lord about how best to love and lead you well in this next season, so that YOU can be, as ***Ephesians*** says, "***equipped for the work of the ministry.***" - be not just followers of Jesus/disciples, but disciples who make disciples!
- **2)** Pray that as we meet; when we meet/however we meet, that God's Spirit would be all up in it, so that you, me and those around us would get such a taste of the grace of Christ, that it just

permeates out from us and impacts everyone around us - as **2 Corinthians** says, “*the aroma of Christ going out to everyone.*”

- And then **3)** Pray for yourselves. Pray that God would give YOU a real spirit of courage to take Him at His word and contribute to the life of this church family by attending, caring and giving!

3 things! So could we just get 3 people to come off mute and pray, one at a time, for those things, after which I'll pray to close us and send us out with a blessing. So would someone be willing to pray for our Elder Candidates and hearing from God?...Great. Thanks!...How about the Spirit's involvement in our Gatherings?...Awesome. Thanks!...And finally, how about praying for all us us to courageously take God at His word more!...Wonderful. Thanks!...Alright in that order, let's pray together, and the rest of you, feel free to pray along/maybe even extend your hands out as a sign of humble submission and wanting to receive from God as we pray. Let's pray...

SENDING:

Friends, if you got any questions feel free to contact me, Matt or Ed, but in the meantime and as you are SENT into your week, receive this, our Missional Family Meeting passage and blessing for the week: **2 Peter 1:3-4**, which says, “*(God's) divine power (in Christ) has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature*” - which is to say, in-part, people of courage in a world of fear! So go in peace, thinking on, believing and treasuring all that God in Christ has done for you, until it pushes you to courageously step out where you need to!

Thanks. **You are Sent!**