

## A VISION CHECK-UP: SEEING WITH EYES OF FAITH

I have come to realize we can learn a great deal from children. Have you noticed how trusting and transparent they are?

Well, the years with children go by so quickly and before you know it, we are celebrating their new accomplishments as they learn to count and color, write their name, and to ride a bicycle without training wheels. Especially during the early childhood years, parents often hear their son or daughter say, "Look what I can do!" There is great celebration for both the child and the parents. What is it that happens to us along life's journey that turns that exuberant spirit of what we can do into a lethargic spirit to only speak of what we can't do?

It has been said that success comes in cans, not can'ts. Do we as the people of God believe we can or that we cannot? Do we miss the great blessings at the top of the mountain because we are so certain that we can't endure the climb? Do we wholeheartedly believe Philippians 4:13, "*I can do everything through him who gives me strength*"?

Questions such as these are not new ones. They have been around since biblical days. In Numbers, Chapter 13, Moses sent out twelve spies to explore the land of Canaan. At the end of forty days, they returned from their trip. Out of twelve men, ten were whining, "We can't!" Two were proclaiming, "We can!" Their names were Joshua and Caleb. Let's look at what the doubters had to say in verses 27-28. *They gave Moses this account:*

*"We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful and the cities are fortified and very large." The "can't" attitude is speaking loud and clear. But in verse 30 Caleb's "can-do" attitude speaks up to say, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it." But more negative talk bellows out from the ten in verse 31, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." The chapter goes on to say that these doubters spread a bad report among the Israelites about the land they had visited.*

Negativity spreads like a grass fire! They even went so far as to compare themselves to grasshoppers. Counselors today would say they suffered from a serious case of bad self-talk and low self-esteem! There is certainly no kumbaya being sung in this camp! Rather, can't you just hear them wailing in song about gloom and despair and in a tug-of-war with Joshua and Caleb? The Israelites' vision was blinded by doubts.

Do you ever find yourself singing a song of despair or rehearsing to God why you can't do one thing or another? Perhaps you tell God that you are just not outgoing enough to invite your unsaved neighbor to church. If only more of us would radically trust and obey God and stop offering Him our list of can'ts. At times, we treat the Maker of heaven and earth as if He lost all His power that first Sabbath Day when He rested from His work. Our human reasoning and our excuses are never a match for faith and trust in God!

Well, Caleb was not about to sing a depressing song. He knew he was in the minority but he also knew His God was a winner, not a loser. He was not going to live his life in fear. Far too many Christians major in fear and minor in faith. Like the ten doubters, we know that there is good that God has available for us, but we have allowed fear to permeate and paralyze our mind, body, and soul. The outcome: OUR FAITH IS CRIPPLED. Oh, that we would rise up, stand firm, and become a Caleb for the Lord, and not allow the doubters around us to steal our enthusiasm for the ministry work and blessings of our Almighty God!

Point 1: People with great spiritual vision don't allow doubters or even their own personal doubts to blind their godly spiritual eyesight.

The story continues with rebellion of the doubting Israelites but rest assured that God has not forgotten His servant, Caleb. Although God declares that those who have been disobedient will not even see the land that was intended for them, He says this about Caleb in Numbers 14:24, *"But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it."* Don't you love how God recognizes the heart and soul of a man, woman, or child that is wholeheartedly devoted to Him? The mind of God never forgets a heart of faithfulness and He offers His divine help to us. 2 Chronicles 16:9 says, *"For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him."*

Fast forward with me to forty-five years later where we go to Joshua 14:9. Caleb is now eighty-five years old. He is in conversation with his dear friend, Joshua. He reminds Joshua of the day that Moses said, *"The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly."* You and I might consider Caleb to be a senior adult at this point, but Caleb's mind was still alert and his body and soul ready to take on a challenge for the Lord! He remembered with faith the promise that had been made to him for possessing the land. We, too, must choose to remember the promises of God and not allow circumstances or others' lack of faith to deter us from actively living by faith! Our age, bank account, social status, nor education should stand in the way of us sitting at the feet of the Lord and being willing to say, "Here I am, your servant is listening." Or standing before the Lord and saying, "Here am I, Lord ... send me!"

Point 2: People with great spiritual vision see God at work when others do not.

The eighty-five year old Caleb speaks to Joshua in Joshua 14:11-13 and says, *“I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I’m just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. 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. Then Joshua blessed Caleb ... and gave him Hebron as his inheritance.”*

It is important for us to remember Caleb’s key words here, *“But the LORD helping me.”* How many times do we move and press ahead without asking God for His instruction and for His help and power? We live in a world of self-will, self-made, self-sufficient, self-defense, self-indulgence, self-help, self-seeking, and self-pity. Make no mistake about it, Caleb knew he could not be a conqueror and win any battle without the presence and power of God at his side.

So, what is this key to having God’s presence and power in our everyday lives? What would Caleb say to us as we face our current economy and hear all the bad reports around us? What kept Caleb from having a doubter’s vision throughout those forty-five years of waiting for the land he’d been promised?

I can tell you that it had nothing to do with self-will or self-help. It is called having intimacy with God – not a mere acquaintance with Him. When our relationship with God is heart-healthy, our heartbeat begins to beat the same as His. You and I love what He loves and we hate what He hates. We no longer demand our own

way and groan, moan, fall and fail in defeat. Our will yields to His will. We no longer fight the idea of surrender; we long to surrender! We celebrate that He’s the One who equips us to live the victorious life just as Caleb lived!

May I ask you if you have bought into the lies that others are selling? Are you tired of hanging around doubters who only focus on the problems and seem not to see the Problem-Solving God of the Universe at work? It’s been said, “Problems are over our head, but under God’s feet!” How true this is!

Point 3: People with great spiritual vision let God do the leading and they do the following.

Like Caleb, stop listening to people who only have a bad report to share! Don’t turn back from possessing all that God has for you. Is He calling you to become a Caleb for such a time as this? If God can use and equip Caleb at age eighty-five to do a new thing, don’t you think He can do the same for you and me? Don’t ever turn away from the calling on your life, even if and when things become unstable around you.

Allow me to speak from experience. I grew up in a Christian home, and accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior as a young child. My calling into ministry occurred shortly after that spiritual decision. Little did I know that later in my adult life, there would be a journey of deep loss and pain. It included my former husband and me experiencing the death of our firstborn infant son, a 7 year illness, requiring me to undergo 7 surgeries, and then after 10 years of marriage, hearing my husband say that he wanted out of the marriage. I would now be placed in the category known as divorced. Do you think I had my moments of doubting that God would still be able to use someone like me? You can be sure that I did, but death, disease, and divorce are not the important issues. The most important news is that I can stand before you as a minister of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ only because of a holy, loving, gracious, forgiving, faithful God who specializes in repairing and restoring broken lives! Praise be to our God! I can testify that He has performed an Isaiah 43:18 & 19 in my life.

*Forget the former things;  
do not dwell on the past.  
See, I am doing a new thing!  
Now is springs up; do you not perceive it?  
I am making a way in the desert  
and streams in the wasteland.*

Perhaps you sincerely have doubts you are struggling with. I want to encourage you to use the tools that God has given to us. Let me quickly mention 3. I cannot state strongly enough how vital it is to be a person who:

- Is reading God's Word daily
- Is a praying person daily
- Is part of a local church weekly

These spiritual lifelines will help you to know the deep heart of God, give you His power to see and live above and beyond the doubts, and have a family of believers who are there to love and support you and help you grow in Christ. Also, reach out to those here at NBC. Let us walk with you and be your prayer partners and spiritual cheerleaders!

In closing, I invite you to ask God to give you eyes of great faith – greater than ever before. God wants to give us His kind of vision so that we can see with eyes of faith, just as Caleb did!

Say to him, "Here am I, Lord ... send me."

Let's pray.