

PARALYZING FEAR OR PERSISTENT FAITH
Next Steps Devotional Guide > Numbers 13 & 14
Sermon Series: It's A Brand New Year, Is It The Same Old You?
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Kelly Stanley

1. When a New Year rolls around, people make what are called “New Year’s Resolutions.” For some, it is to get in better shape through exercise, joining gym, and/or a diet change. Data shows that whatever New Year’s Resolutions people make, 25% quit within the first week. 43% quit before February, 23% quit within the year and only 9% actually fulfill their New Year’s Resolutions. It is not very encouraging news.
 - a. The #1 resolution people make is to get better healthy. What non-spiritual New Year’s Resolutions did you make or could you make for 2023?
 - b. What “spiritual” New Year’s Resolutions did you make or could you make or should you make for 2023?
 - c. Read Hebrews 11:1 in your sermon outline. This verse is about perspective — how we see things and then respond to them. It takes no faith when you have all the facts. Those facts can make you mad, sad, or glad. Yet, faith is stepping out without any facts or in spite of them. When was the last time you did that and what happened? What did you learn from it spiritually?
2. In our text for today, Numbers 13 & 14, the Hebrews are on the verge of entering the Promised Land. God brought 10 plagues against Egypt to get them freed and had even drowned the entire Egyptian army in the Red Sea. Through it all, God has batted a thousand. He has hit a home run every time. There is no reason for the Hebrews to doubt God at this point.
 - a. Read Numbers 13:13-20 in your sermon outline. Moses selected 12 spies, 1 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel to do a little reconnaissance of the land God was giving them. He even told them to bring back some grapes from the land. If the land was already theirs to take, why do they to do a reconnaissance of it? Do you think this was the right decision by Moses to do this? Why or why not?
 - b. Moses is sending these 12 spies out on a “vision trip.” Moses says, *“I’m going to send you on a fact-finding mission, and I want you to go see everything out here. I want you to sample and I want you to taste, and I want you to bring some back.”* Before anyone can succeed with a goal, they have to see it first. If you can’t see yourself being healthy, you never will get healthy. If you can’t see yourself being used by God, you never will. If you can’t see yourself married, finishing college, starting a career or whatever your dream is, if you can’t see it, you can’t succeed in it. What is that dream for you and what are you doing with it?
 - c. Read Numbers 13:21-26 in your sermon outline. The 12 spies go out and do what Moses instructed them to do over 40 days. All of this sounds great. The land is everything and more God had said. You would have thought the people would be so excited to go take the land that Moses would have to hold them back. In reality, 10 of the 12 spies gave a true report about the land but gave a bad report about the inhabitants. Only 2 spies, Caleb and Joshua, were ready to take the land. Why do you think these 10 spies did this?
3. It all comes down to perspective. The glass is either half full or it is half empty. Notice the level of the water is the same — it’s just your perspective. When we allow paralyzing fear to take over our lives, we will get frustrated and stressed because we keep getting conflicting information.
 - a. Read Numbers 13:27-28 in your sermon outline under point #1. Notice that one word “BUT” is used here. In your sermon outline the word “BUT” is with all caps intentionally. How many times have you or you have heard someone else say, *“Oh, I would love to do that, BUT . . .”* Then comes the fear masked as excuses. Jesus said this in Matthew 19:26b, *“But with God everything is possible” (NLT)*. This verse makes great plagues and posters but do you really believe it personally? On a scale for 1-100, if God were to grade you on this, what grade do you think God would give you and why?
 - b. Lifeway Research has data that says between 3,850-7,000 churches are closing their doors every year and it is expected to double and triple in the future. Some of this is due to the pandemic, but the major reason is these churches refused to change. It is the attitude that says, *“Don’t mend, don’t tend, don’t spend and don’t send.”* Why do you think churches develop this paralyzing fear that holds them back?
4. When we allow paralyzing fear to be our perspective, then we hold on to what we have now because we fear we will not have enough later. It is the fear that says you are going to run short and you’re going to run out.
 - a. Read Numbers 13:29 in your sermon outline in point #2. The 10 of the spies gave their report of the different ethnic groups that occupied the Promise Land. Their point was: *“There is no room for us. This was supposed to be our Promise Land, but it is already filled with people. They are not going to want to give it to us. They will see us as the enemy. They are not going to put up with us moving in there. Why in the world did God bring us here. There is absolutely not enough room for us and them too.”* What did their paralyzing fear keep them from seeing from God?
 - b. We hear today, *“Well, the economy is bad. Recession is increasing. Interest rates are rising. Better be safe now than sorry later.”* When you look at your own life, what and where in your own life are you holding on to something and hoarding something for the future due to paralyzing fear? What is that specifically?
5. The perspective of paralyzing fear will cause you to start fulfilling your own self-defeating prophecies.
 - a. The person who says, *“I can’t do that”* and the person who says, *“I can do that,”* which one of them is right? Both are right. The next Olympics is July 26-August 11, 2024. How many of those athletes who are already

training for this are saying, *"I can't do this. I can't win."* None of them. They know the odds of winning a medal, so why do you they are training?

- b. If you tell yourself in advance, *"I can't do this. It will never happen in my life. I could not get in shape. I could not get out of debt. I could not get married. I could not adopt a child. I could not . . ."* or whatever it is, you're right. You think, *"PK, I could give you a hundred reasons where I could not..."* and you're right. Whatever you think determines how you feel and then how you feel determines how you act. What are you telling yourself, *"I can't do this? This will never happen in my life?"* Where in your life do you see you contributing to your self-defeating prophecies?
 - c. Read Numbers 13:30-31 in your sermon outline in point #3. What does this tell you about the power, influence and affect leaders and you can have on others?
6. When we allow the perspective of paralyzing fear to take over, we become a virus, infecting others with doubt, fear and negativity. Read Numbers 13:32a in your sermon outline in point #4 as well as the explanation for the Hebrew word translated as "bad." These 10 spies did not just give a bad report, they accused God of being a liar and as a result God punished them by not allowing them to enter the Promise Land. When you allow paralyzing fear to keep you from trusting God, you are in essence calling God a liar. What do you think this means for Southside and which group of spies will you join? — the 10 spies who gave a bad report of the 2 spies, Caleb and Joshua who said, *"Let's do this"?*
7. The perspective of paralyzing fear causes us to see ourselves or others or even a church as inadequate for the challenge.
- a. Read Numbers 13:32b-33 in your sermon notes in point #5 as well as the explanation for the Hebrew word translated as "devour." Whatever you worry about only gets bigger in your mind. And pretty soon you are facing a "giant" that you feel you cannot be overcome. The Hebrews saw themselves as "grasshoppers" and the inhabitants as giants in the Promise Land. The spies felt they were inadequate for the challenge. What do you feel you are inadequate to do for God?
 - b. The 10 spies even said that the inhabitants of the Promise Land would see them as grasshoppers. No one in this land had even seen them yet, so why do you think they believed that and said that?
8. The perspective of paralyzing fear causes us to make ourselves miserable. Read Numbers 14:1-2 in your sermon outline in point #6.
- a. When we give ourselves a pity party, it will consist of 3 things: crying, complaining and being cynical. The 10 spies said, *"Why couldn't we have died in Egypt or even in the wilderness."* Do you hear and see the crying, the complaining and the cynicism here? People say, *"It would have been better had I never been born."* As your pastor it is my job to force you to face your fears. Where and when have you cried, complained and been cynical with moving forward for God?
 - b. Read 2 Corinthians 5:7 and Hebrews 11:1, 6, in your sermon outline in point #6. What do these passages tell you about moving forward with God in spite of the absence of facts or because of the facts?
 - c. Read Numbers 13:30 in your sermon outline in point #6. Caleb and Joshua urged the people to move forward against what the other 10 spies were saying. Why do you think they did this?
9. In your sermon outline, you were given 3 "baby" steps you can take to move with persistent faith against your paralyzing fears. Read Jesus' words in John 14:27 and John 3:3 in your sermon outline under point #1. First, you have to give every room in your heart to Jesus. Worries and fears reveal to you the areas in your life that are not under Christ's control. What "room(s)" in your heart are you keeping Jesus out?
10. A second "baby" step you can take to move with persistent faith against your paralyzing fear is to take the first steps in an area you have not yet taken.
- a. Read God's word to the Hebrews at Mt. Sinai in Deuteronomy 1:6 in your sermon outline in point #2. What is your "mountain" you would rather stay around rather than move out in persistent faith?
 - b. Read Exodus 14:15 in your sermon outline in point #2. This verse comes as the Hebrews are about to cross the yet not parted waters of the Red Sea. They have an approaching Egyptian army on their heels ready to slaughter them and the Red Sea in front of them. The Hebrew text gives us the impression that the water did not part until they started entering it. So, what is your "Red Sea?"
 - c. Maybe your first step is accepting Jesus. Do it now. Maybe your first step is to get baptized or to re-baptized by immersion. Read Romans 6:3-4 in your sermon notes in point #2 as well as the explanation for the Greek New Testament word translated as "baptized." If you have not been immersed, do it as your first step. Maybe your first step is to get involved in a ministry or start a new ministry or stay in a ministry you want to quit. Take that first step this week. What is that first step for you?
11. A third "baby" step you can take is to simply trust and obey God to do whatever He tells you to regardless of the opposition. This is exactly what the two spies Caleb and Joshua did.
- a. Read 1 Samuel 15:22-23 in your sermon outline in point #3. King Saul refused to trust and obey God and then he even lied about it. God's punishment was quick. Samuel said to King Saul, *"Obedience is better than anything else you can do. Rebellion is participating in the occult, in evil and cooperating with the devil and his demons."* Where are you compromising due to paralyzing fear rather than moving forward with persistent faith for Jesus Christ?
 - b. Read Numbers 14:6-9 in your sermon outline in point #3. What does this tell you?
 - c. Hebrews 3:19 is a sad passage. Read it in your sermon notes. What is God saying to you from this?
 - d. Read Philippians 3:13 in your sermon outline. Where can you do this in your own life starting now?