

THERE BE GIANTS: EMBRACING GOD'S ASSIGNMENTS

Part 12 of Foundations 260 - OT. Numbers 13-14.

Peter Foxwell. The Cornerstone Church. May 3, 2026.

Dismiss the Middle School

DISNEYLAND vs. SURVIVOR

Some people will tell you that following Jesus is an adventure, a journey full of quests and excitement. They make it sound like a trip to Disneyland.

Other people will tell you that following Jesus is hard. There are definitely high points, but also extreme challenges. They make it sound like an episode of Survivor.

So ... which is it?

It's both. I'm just being honest with you. Following Jesus is a mixed bag most of the time. We might feel excited or stressed, full of faith or struggling.

So ... I want us to explore what it takes to follow Jesus even when he asks us to do hard things. Things like:

- Loving our wives like Christ loves the church.
- Speaking encouragement rather than gossip.
- Inviting a friend to church.

I call these God's assignments. How can we embrace them?

NUMBERS 13 - 14

Our Bible passage today is Numbers 13-14. We covered it last week in our Foundations 260 reading plan.

Twelve scouts go into the Promised Land to prepare a report for Moses in preparation for invasion. Things don't go well.

- One way to approach those chapters is to focus on what **not to do** when God gives us an assignment.
- But I believe it will be more helpful if we focus on what **to do** when asked to follow Jesus even when it's challenging.

Let's begin with some background, so we have a context for today's teaching.

Background

Israel escaped from Egypt in the springtime. By late summer or early fall, they had arrived at the southern border of the Land God promised to Abraham. The land of Canaan.

Spiritually speaking, Israel was in rough shape. The people were consistently unfaithful. Numbers 13-14 record the fourth in a series of rebellions against God.

However, if we read it carefully, **the passage teaches us three ways to embrace God's assignments.**

Let's explore those now.

1. WE NEED AN OBEDIENT ATTITUDE

We see this illustrated at the beginning of chapter 13:

Numbers 13:1-3 (CSB) The LORD spoke to Moses: 2 “Send men to scout out the land of Canaan I am giving to the Israelites. Send one man who is a leader among them from each of their ancestral tribes.” 3 Moses sent them from the Wilderness of Paran at the LORD’s command. All the men were leaders in Israel.

Moses obeyed God. And the scouts obeyed Moses:

Numbers 13:17-18, 21 (CSB) When Moses sent them to scout out the land of Canaan, he told them, “Go up this way to the Negev, then go up into the hill country. 18 See what the land is like, and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. ... 21 So they went up and scouted out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob near the entrance to Hamath.

The spies traveled on foot from south of the Dead Sea, north through the Land, all the way to what is now southern Lebanon. And back again. It was a long and demanding journey of roughly 350-500 miles in total.

But they obeyed. And that’s the first stage in embracing God’s assignments.

The late Charles Stanley developed a series of Life Principles for the Christian life. Principle #2 is: *“A Life of Obedience - Obey God and leave all the consequences to him.”* He writes:

“When we choose to obey God, we take the way of wisdom. His promises of blessing for obedience far outweigh any possible consequences. He asks us to submit ourselves to Him and leave whatever happens to His loving care.”¹

¹ <https://www.intouch.org/watch/sermons/life-principle-2-a-life-of-obedience>

Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey my commands” (John 14:15). So, when Jesus teaches us what to do, our default reply should be, “OK, yes, Lord.”

It’s very difficult to follow Jesus if we’re always questioning his teachings or his will for our lives. That attitude produces doubt, fear, and inner turmoil. It undermines faithfulness. But having a default “Yes, Lord” attitude works best.

Try the 10-second rule: When God’s will is clear and its application is obvious, do it within 10 seconds. Don’t debate, ask what if, or ruminate on it. Just do it.

Charles Stanley again:

“There is no way to go wrong if you place your hope and trust in God. He created you, and He loves you with an eternal love. Therefore, He will always lead you in the very best way possible.”²

² <https://www.intouch.org/watch/sermons/life-principle-2-a-life-of-obedience>

2. WE NEED A PROMISE-DRIVEN MINDSET

Faith isn't a blind leap into the void, which, why would anyone ever do that?

No, faith is trust in God's character and promises. God is powerful, sovereign, good, and faithful. He keeps his Word. We can trust him and his promises.

God promised to give the Land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants - the nation of Israel (Genesis 12:7, Genesis 15:18–21, and Genesis 17:8, etc).

So, when God told Moses, *“Send men to scout out the land of Canaan **I am giving** to the Israelites” (Numbers 13:2, CSB)*, Moses trusted in God's ancient promise, knowing that the Land was God's gift.

Unfortunately, 10 of the 12 scouts lacked a promise-driven mindset. They believed the Land was filled with abundance, but the challenges were too great:

*Numbers 13:31-33 (CSB) But the men who had gone up with him responded, “We can't attack the people because they are stronger than we are! ” 32 So they gave a negative report to the Israelites about the land they had scouted: “The land we passed through to explore is one that devours its inhabitants, and all the people we saw in it are men of great size. 33 We even saw the Nephilim (**mighty men of old - Genesis 6:1-4**) there — the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim! To ourselves, we seemed like grasshoppers, and we must have seemed the same to them.”*

I can imagine them moaning: *“There be giants!! There's no way we can conquer those 'men of great size'.”* No mention of God. No memory of his mighty Exodus deliverance. No trust in his promises.

Unbelief is a huge no-no. It is a terrible sin because it makes him seem weak and untrustworthy. It sees our circumstances and fear as being greater than God's power and promise.

So... how can we build a promise-driven mindset? Two things come to mind:

- **Meditate on the greatness and goodness of God.** Isaiah 6 was a big help to me, especially after reading R. C. Sproul's book about it, *The Holiness of God*. It helped to grow my trust in God.
- **Learn and lean on God's promises.** When the apostle Paul was in prison, chained up, in terrible condition, he wrote that he felt contentment even when he was cold and hungry. Imagine that: how was he contented? Because he knew passages like Psalm 23 - promises of provision and protection. So, Paul wrote:

Philippians 4:13 (CSB) I am able to do all things (in context, feel contentment in jail) through him who strengthens me.

The more we lean on his promises, the more we'll see God at work in our lives, and the more promise-driven our lives will become.

When God gives us an impossible assignment, we can step out in faith, believing that **where he guides, he also provides.**

The great missionary pioneer, William Carey, preached a sermon in 1792, urging the church to get involved in global missions. At one point, he said, ***“Attempt great things for God, expect great things from God.”***

3. WE NEED A MAVERICK SPIRIT

When the people heard the faithless spies' report, fear gripped the camp.

Numbers 14:1-2 (CSB) Then the whole community broke into loud cries, and the people wept that night. 2 All the Israelites complained about Moses and Aaron, and the whole community told them, "If only we had died in the land of Egypt, or if only we had died in this wilderness!"

If Moses were a conformist or people-pleaser, he would have relented. "Ok, OK, we don't have to do this."

But God doesn't entrust his assignments to conformists. Doing God's will often means swimming upstream in a downstream culture.

God gives assignments to mavericks and nonconformists. People like Caleb and Joshua, two spies who refused to bend to the majority opinion:

*Numbers 14:6-9 (CSB) Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who scouted out the land, tore their clothes 7 and said to the entire Israelite community, "The land we passed through and explored is an extremely good land. 8 If the LORD is pleased with us, **he will bring us into this land**, a land flowing with milk and honey, **and give it to us**. 9 Only don't rebel against the LORD, and **don't be afraid** of the people of the land, for we will devour them. Their protection has been removed from them, and **the LORD is with us**. Don't be afraid of them! "*

That wasn't arrogance. It was trust in God. Joshua and Caleb went against the crowd. They refused to cave in to the pressure to turn back or give up. They were God's mavericks.

GOD LOOKS FOR OBEDIENT, PROMISE-DRIVEN, MAVERICKS

Every follower of Jesus is on assignment. He's revealed his will in his Word. It's not a mystery.

The first hurdle to embracing God's assignments is deciding to obey. So, start with an attitude that says, *"Yes, Lord. Whatever you command, I will do."* If there is an area in which you're not obedient to Jesus, sort it out.

But, eventually, we'll be asked to follow Jesus in something that feels impossible; for example, to forgive someone who hurt us deeply. We all have something we dread doing. The only way to overcome it is to believe that God is great and good, enough to trust his promises, pray for his help, and take the next step.

But not everyone will cheer us on when we step out in faith to obey the Lord. More likely, the crowd will disapprove. The only way forward is to be a maverick, a nonconformist who values God's approval above everything else.

God looks for obedient, promise-driven, mavericks, men and women so entranced by God's goodness and greatness that we do whatever he commands, and go wherever he directs.

Before his arrest, the Lord Jesus prayed, ***"Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me – nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done"*** (Luke 22:42, CSB).

Let's all pray the same.

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Review

- Review Peter's May 3rd teaching and study guide.
- What were the main insights of Peter's teaching?
- What questions do you have about the passage or Peter's teaching?
- What were the main applications or takeaways for your life?

Discuss

1. If someone new to faith asked you, "Is following Jesus worth it when it's this hard?" how would you honestly answer from your own experience?
2. Where do you most often argue with, delay, or "negotiate" with Jesus instead of simply obeying (e.g., forgiveness, marriage, money, purity, serving, speaking up)? How have you seen willing obedience work out? Discuss the 10-second rule that Peter mentioned.
3. Think of concrete promises of God you already know (e.g., presence, provision, forgiveness, wisdom). How might clinging to one of those promises change the way you tackle a current assignment from God?
4. Think of a time you did obey Jesus even when others didn't understand or approve. What did that cost you, and how did God meet you in it? How do you overcome the fears that rise up when you imagine being a "maverick" for God in your context (fear of rejection, being misunderstood, losing comfort, etc.)?

Prayer Focus

- 247: "Lord, please add daily to the Cornerstone those who are being saved."