



## RECON MISSION | CHAD BRUEGMAN

### START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer these two questions:

**Have you ever been planning on doing something, but then chickened out at the last second? If so, would you ever reconsider it?**

### SHARE

Welcome to our series “Battle Tested.” In the next few weeks, we are going to take a look at some stories of people in the Bible who were battle-tested. We all go through battles at different times and for different reasons. As we walk through these stories, our hope is that we can learn from each one and gain a better understanding of the wisdom, strength and sustaining power of God.

In the word of God, we find stories where God makes a promise to an individual or to a people, and then many times there is a gap between the time the promise is made and the time it is fulfilled. There are also times where God’s people received a promise, yet that was just the beginning of the fight. We can find ourselves fighting battles when times are tough; and also when we are experiencing success, we can be faced with brand new fights and pressures we never imagined.

As we go through this series, allow God to speak to you about your life and the battles you might be facing. What God calls us to is always worth the fight. Maybe your battle is working tirelessly on building a better marriage, struggling to live a life of purity, fighting to be ethical and honest at work, digging deep to forgive someone. Whatever the fight might be, we must always cling to the promises of God and remember that He can lead and sustain us.

Last week we talked about Joshua leading the Israelites into the Promised Land and fighting thirty-one battles to take possession of what God promised His people. God’s promises don’t always come without a fight. In this week’s message, we go back in time to when Joshua was a younger leader and an aide to Moses. God led the people to the edge of the Promised Land and asked Moses to send a group of leaders in to scout. These spies were to assess the land, fruit, soil, fortifications, inhabitants, and understand the challenges they would encounter if they went into battle.

Moses sent twelve of the best leaders into the land. Two of those leaders, Joshua and Caleb, had tremendous faith in God’s promises while the others were fearful and negative. Two leaders went in to see “how” they could win the battle and the other ten went in to see “if” they could win the battle.

## Read Numbers 13

What was the purpose of the spies going into the land?

How did people react to Caleb's inspirational moment encouraging the people to take possession of the land?

In the case of the spies, the majority of leaders were skeptical or negative about the obstacles, but a minority were optimistic and faith-filled. Do you tend to be more of a skeptical/negative person or more optimistic/positive when faced with a big challenge? Why do you think you are that way?

## GROW

Throughout the Old Testament, we see very tangible promises made to the people of God. Many times those promises were specific, like the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and the geographic territory called the Promised Land. Others seem to be broader and all-encompassing as God promised he would be with his people and not abandon them. Whether the promise is specific or broad, we can trust the God who promises.

Faith focuses on the promises and not the varying degrees of how we feel about a situation. This is precisely why faith is so important. We trust God's hand, even when we can't see how things will work out. So the question at hand is, are we going to move forward trusting the promises of God or are we going to give in to fear, turn from God and go back the way we came?

### Let's read Numbers 14:1-4

R.D. Cole, in *The New American Commentary: Numbers*, helps us better understand how the negative report by a majority of the spies sparked a rebellion in the people toward their leadership, even to the extent that some wanted to return to slavery instead:

The very people who had seen first-hand the marvelous and miraculous demonstration of God's omnipotence against one of the most powerful nations of the second millennium B.C. now longed to return to a world of bondage rather than believe a word of blessing. The sinful human tendency, even among Christians, to lapse back into the addictive ways of sin and despair after having seen the outward demonstration of God's working on their behalf was evidenced in this setting. Often in a state of rebellion against God, one loses the benefit of spiritual mooring, whereby wisdom and discernment become elusive and proper decision making is made extremely difficult. Worry and fear dominate one's thought patterns. The Israelites had thus renounced and rejected God's beneficence, by now suggesting that a return to Egypt would be a *good thing* rather than marching into a land that even the cynical scouts deemed as *good*. Further evidence of their stupefaction can be seen in the statement in v. 3, where they suggested that God might have led them into the desert to die. They made the God of life and hope to be one of death and despair. Wenham notes: "By this time they actually propose returning to Egypt, thereby rejecting the whole plan of redemption. From Exodus 1 to the mission of the spies is but one plot: how Israel was brought out of Egypt to the borders of Canaan. Now within sight of their goal they suggest giving it all up."

In order to return to Egypt, they would need to choose new leadership to replace Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb. They now could only remember the good food they ate in Egypt, like the cucumbers, leeks, melons, and onions. They seemed to forget the tyrannous oppression they had so long experienced at the

hand of its pharaonic leadership. As noted in the previous structural outline, the recurring theme of leadership and the correlative followship of the people are keys to understanding the development of the narrative. They had rejected Caleb's word, and now they must reject their divinely appointed leader, Moses, in order to accomplish this reversal of goals. Their godly leaders, however, would not simply stand by in silence while the program of promise collapsed; they had to respond with every fiber of their physical and spiritual beings to try to thwart this potential disaster.

**Why was the people's rebellion such a serious event?**

**As a follower of Jesus, we aren't promised an easy life, but an abundant life. When things get difficult, do you ever want to retreat to what is familiar or return to where you were enslaved before God set you free?**

## **MOVE**

Perspective is everything. In the midst of a great challenge, the people of God were caught up in fear and panic. They were forgetting the powerful God who delivered them from slavery in Egypt, delivered the most powerful army on the planet, who split the sea in two so that they could escape. God fed them and provided for them, and yet at the doorstep of the promise, their knees buckled. They would rather choose slavery or death than confront their fears.

God's power had not changed, but the hearts of the people toward God did.

**Let's read Numbers 14:5-9**

Moses, Aaron, Joshua and Caleb fell facedown, tore their clothes and pleaded with the people to trust God, yet the people's hearts were far from trusting God. In the end, because of the people's stubbornness, they did not enter the Promised Land and were forced to wander for 40 years in the wilderness. Because of their faith in God, only Joshua and Caleb would enter and thrive in the Promised Land with the next generation of Israelites.

**Caleb and Joshua chose to trust God's promises when those around them seemed louder and more convincing. Do you typically have friends around you who are encouraging of your faith?**

**If you don't have like-minded friends pursuing God around you, what steps can you take this week to start developing some who do?**

**Read Romans 10:16-17**

*We can build our faith by knowing the promises of the word of God. How can we stand on the promises if we don't hear them and know them? One of the best things you can do when faced with fear is to look up promises in the word of God. This week, look up five promises you can write down or journal that will remind you of God's truth. Speak them out loud, memorize them.*

## PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles we all face. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

## TO GO

### **Romans 8:28**

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*