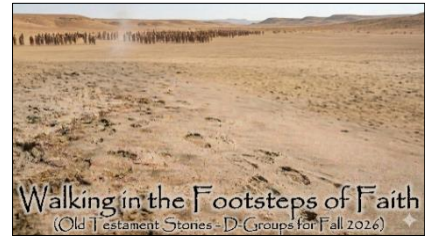


“Walking in the Footsteps of Faith”

OT Stories - Fall 2026 D-Groups

For Wednesday, October 7
JOSHUA and CALEB (Numbers 13:1-14:45)



The Big Picture - Where We Are in the OT Timeline

For this week, we jump forward about two years in time. In doing so, though, we’re moving from the first part of Exodus clear to the middle part of Numbers. In-between, the Israelites spend over a year at Mt. Sinai. That’s where Yahweh establishes His covenant with the people in faithfulness to His covenant promise (see Exodus 19:1ff - it’s about *His* character, not the people!). As part of that, it’s where Moses received the Law, including the 10 Commandments. In this role, he also passes on to the people the covenant obligations - the terms they were to keep as part of the relationship the LORD graciously established. A big portion of the rest of Exodus and Leviticus lays out instructions for the Tabernacle (representative of God’s presence among the people) and the priesthood, including the sacrificial system.

Even though we move beyond Genesis and Exodus, though, the foundational promise to Abraham still carries significance. This nation, the people of Israel, is the nation promised to him. Their destination is the “Promised Land,” *the* land originally guaranteed to him and his descendants. In fact, throughout this section of the Old Testament, there are regular reminders that keep this promise at the forefront: **this nation exists and succeeds because of the faithfulness of Yahweh, the One whose promise drives the story.** That continues up and through the conquest of the land in the book of Joshua. The land became special because of the promise originally contained in it!

That promise factors in to *this* story in Numbers as well. ***The LORD, in keeping with His original promise to Abraham, is leading His covenant people (graciously chosen and powerfully rescued by Him) to their new homeland, the Promised Land.*** Along the way, though, He has unfortunately already endured the people’s *unfaithfulness* (e.g., the cries of “back to Egypt,” the Golden Calf, etc.) and grumbling (e.g., about water, food, Moses, etc.) - ironically, starting from right after the exodus! We can probably best capture their demeanor even in terms of rebellion against Him. The contrast continues in Numbers: amidst this promise, the people complain to the point of questioning the LORD’s goodness, faithfulness and even His plan. All of that is significant to the story that unfolds. Looking back on the story, it’s a powerful reminder that He is the Hero. What matters for us as His people is this: **are we going to be people of faith that trust Him or people of unbelief that don’t?!**

The Close-Up for October 7 - Numbers 13:1-14:45

READ the TEXT: both chapters, as this is a much briefer portion of Scripture

Some notes on the overall flow of the story with emphasis on the key sections listed above:

13:1-24 ... From the southern edge of the Promised Land, Moses commissions 12 “spies” - one from each of the tribes - to scout out the land with specific items to focus on (see vv. 17-20). They go and see for themselves the goodness of the land, including its produce.

13:25-14:10a ... Upon their return, the spies give their report on the land. There is unanimous agreement on the quality of the land and its produce. Yet, the eyes of 10 of them focused on the challenges present, especially the daunting people (see 13:28-29, 31-33); as a result of their fear, they could not see beyond that. By contrast, **Joshua and Caleb** courageously express a resolved confidence - *not because they miss the challenges, but because their “eyes of faith” saw beyond (that’s a common theme in connection to faith, as we saw in Hebrews 11!)*. Notice the words of 13:30 and 14:7-9 - words expressing their greater trust in the LORD’s presence and greater strength. Ultimately, behind this is their faith in God’s promise about the land; they are confident of victory *because of the God who is on their side!* Nonetheless, the persuasiveness of the other 10 rule the day in the hearts of the people and they rebel.

14:10b-25 ... Because of the people’s rebellious attitude, the LORD has reached a limit, determined (at least on the surface) to be done with this people and seemingly to start fresh with Moses. This is not the first time Moses has had to intercede for the people before the LORD. It’s interesting to note the basis for his appeal. First, such an action would seem to suggest that Yahweh is not truly powerful enough to accomplish His purposes. Second, it’s a reminder of what He self-revealed about His own character (see 14:17-19). As a result, the people are spared, yet with a consequence!

14:26-38 ... It is this rebellion that leads to the wandering for 40 years in the wilderness - a year for each day of the exploration - to guarantee that none of those older than 20 would be alive to enter the land (again, except for Joshua and Caleb). Yet, their children would experience the blessing (notice the contrast between 14:3 and 14:31-33). Even more, the 10 who incited the rebellion died by a plague because of their actions.

14:39-45 ... In another act of prideful rebellion, upon hearing this verdict, the Israelites defiantly (and foolishly!) choose to go attack the land. Not surprisingly, they are routed.

Two Key Reminders throughout This Semester

1. **God is ultimately the HERO of these stories; remember, as part of Scripture, God is revealing Himself to us. So, what do we learn about Him through this story? What can we learn from the human characters about putting our faith/trust in Him?**
2. **We read these stories through a Christ-lens. So, how do we read this story differently in light of Jesus and being His followers?** While we have not received a promise of specific earthly outcomes, consider the promises we *do have* in Christ and what faith looks like when it means trusting beyond what is visible to earthly eyes.

Some Additional Questions for Reflection

- ***As you reflect on this story, especially the contrast between Joshua and Caleb vs. the rest of the 10, what stands out about a courageous response of faith to God and His promise?***
- ***Factoring-in what we saw earlier in this semester from Hebrews 11, what does this story teach us about having - and living with - “eyes of faith” that see God’s promise (the “invisible”) beyond what might be apparent to earthly eyes (the “visible”)?***
- ***Based on the other 10, what seems to demonstrate the opposite of faith from this story?***