

Faith not Fear

31 August 2014

Introduction

We have heard much lately about living with a kingdom mindset, about faith; not being ashamed of Christ, being overcomers not cowards.

We have heard much about what God is poised to do in our City of Adelaide, about coming revival.

We have a sense of what God wants to do and is poised to do in this congregation. We have heard about (and many of us have experienced) a season of sifting and shaking, refining and the need for us to position ourselves to be ready.

(Glenda last week spoke a word that said God needs to reign in us before he can/will rain on us.)

All challenging stuff!

What does all this mean for us as individuals? For you and me.

When we hear these things spoken of I think we can respond in a variety of ways:

1. We can have a hardhearted/ synical: A “not for me” attitude or “I’ll believe it when I see it” response.
2. Stand back and observe/ be reasonably neutral in our response. We are not opposed to any of it but we don’t allow ourselves to be too challenged by it either. We drift along with the crowd.
3. We can be tentative but wondering, interested but apprehensive. Unsure of what it will require of us.
4. We can be hungry for more, pursue these things, desire to not only see them come to pass but also to participate in all that God has for us.

Which one of those categories describes you?

In the season that we are in there is a challenge before every one of us to go deeper in God. Whatever role we have here, whatever age we are, whatever we may have done before or are doing now, we have an opportunity to pursue God for a greater experience of Him. Only you can do that for you.

Regardless of which category you feel best describes you and where you are at the moment, if you want to move forward, you will need to break new ground in your life. Breaking new ground will bring a fresh release of the Spirit in your life.

What do we need to do this?

- We need a current and growing relationship with God, pursuing his presence.
- Faith
- Obedience to follow as the Holy Spirit leads
- Learn to take risks in God, step out in acts of faith.

A response of faith will move us forward

A response of fear will keep us where we are

Text: Numbers 13

Prior to this passage God had led the Israelites out of Egypt, parted the Red Sea, provided supernaturally for them with manna and quail and water from a rock. The Law had been given and the tabernacle built and the presence of God had been established in their midst and the power of God demonstrated amongst them many times.

I want to take three points from this story that show how we can have a response of faith and not fear as we follow God in the season that lies ahead.

1. Know your mission.

The men sent out to explore the land had a very specific mission. Moses gave them very specific instructions on the type of report they were to bring back. They didn't just casually look around they thoroughly investigated the area.

(see v 17-20)

What is your mission?

For all of us as followers of Christ, our mission is the great commission of **Matthew 28:18:**

‘Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

This is the big picture but let’s drill down to a personal level.
Our Mission could be worded slightly differently:

It is to extend the kingdom of God wherever we go especially in the areas of influence or involvement that we have.

Where is your area of influence or involvement?
It could be your

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| -Workplace | -Neighbours |
| -School / university | -Bus Interchange |
| -Within the church | -Westcare |
| -Discipling others | -Children’s ministry – schools or church based |

How well do we represent and extend the Kingdom of God in these areas? This is more than service-just showing up and doing a good job (although it certainly includes that).

Our mission is to look for opportunities to release the presence of God wherever we go. Do we do that? Do we think about doing that or are we just focused on the service/task?

To use the analogy of a battleship or warship: The ship has a mission, an objective, a reason for being out on the seas. Every person is on board that ship because they have a job to do. There are no passengers.

Not all jobs are the same, some are engineers keeping the ship moving, some are navigators setting the direction, some provide food, some clean, man the weapons, send communications back to base etc.

Everyone knows what they are on board to do and they are trained to do it. All working together is what allows the ship, under the captain's orders, to fulfill the mission.

This is what the body of Christ is like but if we take it down to a personal level again, this is what our congregation is like. We are not all doing the same things, but all of us are working together to impact our community and extend the Kingdom of God wherever we go.

We need to know our mission. It gives us focus.

What is your job on the battleship? Where is your area of influence / involvement in the community? Where are your opportunities to extend the Kingdom of God by releasing the presence of God?

Once we know that we can apply the next 2 points.

2. Look through eyes of faith not fear and learn to take risks.

There were two responses the same situation in this story. Most of the spies (10 out of 12) responded with fear. Only Joshua and Caleb responded with eyes of faith.

They all saw exactly the same thing but their response dictated what they focused on.

Those who responded with fear saw only the difficulties, the size of the cities and the strength of the enemy. They saw all the potential things that could go wrong and the enormity of the task before them.

They saw the reward, the richness of the land, but for them the risk was too great.

Caleb and Joshua also saw the potential difficulties. They acknowledged the strength of the enemy and the enormity of the task before them. They weren't naïve, they saw the danger and the risk but they responded with faith.

They trusted that the God that had led them out of Egypt with amazing demonstrations of his power would lead them again in this situation.

For Joshua and Caleb the reward was greater than the risk- Why?- because they trusted completely in the faithfulness and in the promises of God.

How do you look at situations you are in, particularly in situations where you are interfacing with the community, fulfilling your mission?

Do you look and see only the difficulties, the potential risks or problems, the enormity of the task and the size of the enemy.

Do you see all the opposition, the possible rejection, lack of interest, hardheartedness of the world, the dysfunction in peoples' lives. Do you see all that and get overwhelmed and feel defeated or do you choose to see the potential of what God can do?

It is amazing that in this story there were two completely different responses from the same group of people. All had lived through the same events. All had experienced God's power demonstrated in their midst. All knew of his protection, his provision and His promises concerning them as a people. They were heading to the Promised Land because God had led them there. But still a response of faith was in the minority. In spite of all this most of them didn't trust God enough to believe him for the next hurdle.

Quote:

If your fear is greater than your faith you will draw back but if your faith is greater than your fear you will draw near.

Rev Sean Smith

I am not preaching this morning from a place of having all this together. In fact in recent months I have come to realise that fear drives me far more often than faith does. We are all growing in this together. Even those that are leading by example still battle with fear at times.

Fear will always be there but do we want to be driven by it?

Excerpt from 'The Ultimate Treasure Hunt' by Kevin Dedmond (page 37)

My wife, Theresa, who is an incredible treasure hunter, was in prayer one morning when the Holy Spirit spoke to her about going to a certain local supermarket to find some treasure before coming to our weekly pastors' staff meeting. She was running a little late that morning but decided to follow the prompting she had received. She walked into the store with 'produce' and 'grief' as her only clues.

As she stood there in the produce section, she began to evaluate all the potential treasure. After five minutes or so, feeling a little bewildered that no one seemed to fit the description, she noticed a woman standing by the corn. Motionless, and looking blankly into space, she appeared distraught as she stood with her cart.

Theresa approached her and explained to her about the treasure hunt she was on. She went on to ask whether the woman was dealing with any grief issues because of the 'grief' clue she had received. The woman broke into tears explaining how she had just recently lost her husband to cancer and how that, just a few days prior, their dog had died. She had barely slept since and had not eaten anything. Through her tears, she explained that even though she was severely depressed, she felt like she needed to go to the store. Once she got to the produce department, however, she had no idea why she was there.

After empathetically listening to the woman's story, Theresa offered to pray with her. The woman agreed, and Theresa began praying prophetic prayers of hope and comfort. After she had finished, the woman looked up at her, wiped away the tears, and sked, "Are you an angel?"

Theresa is an ultimate treasure hunter because she has learned to go when she hears something in the prayer closet. She was not always like that. When I met her 30 years ago, she was fairly shy and cautious around strangers. Doing something like she did that day at the supermarket would have been unthinkable. But over the years, she has become an ultimate treasure hunter all because she has been willing to go.

Kevin's wife went from shy and conservative to the ultimate treasure hunter. How did she do that? (That is a book I want to read!)

I'll tell you how she didn't do it. In one giant leap!

It is one step at a time, one risk at a time; small risks at first that lead to greater risks later on. It is a process, a journey not an instant change.

We have to determine to respond with faith and to take risks. We have to be obedient to step out, to go! We take risks according to the measure of faith that we have. As our faith grows our risks get bigger. (Bill Johnson: Increase comes through using what we currently have)

One of the things that has helped me to take risks and grow in a response of faith is understanding the goodness of God. God is good, he can't be anything but good because he can't deny his own character. Everything he wants for us is good. When we follow him in faith what he has for us is good.

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a future and a hope.

This doesn't mean that nothing bad or difficult will ever happen to you but that in the midst of the circumstances, what God has for us is good.

When we went the Randy Clark conference in Perth 2 years ago, it was a significant step in the journey for me. But I went to that conference with a great deal of fear. This was a conference on healing and impartation for praying for healing. At the time of the conference I would rather have prayed for anything else but healing. I didn't have a problem with the theology of it but I had no faith for it. The last thing I was looking for was the gift of healing! But I knew I had to go because I needed to move past the roadblock that was in front of me in this area. I had to position myself so God could do the work in me to remove it and He did.

When we came back I prayed for many people for healing and to my surprise some of them were healed!

I had to step out in faith and take risks. I felt hugely inadequate but God has showed me that it's not about me at all. It is about me being obedient in stepping out, taking the risk and then as I learn to co-labour with His Spirit, he does the work.

I am not a risk taker. I am quite conservative, I do not like taking risks. But I am learning to.

The breakthrough came because I was willing to position myself to receive what I needed to move forward. I didn't stay in my comfort zone. I made myself face the challenge. It wasn't easy but I wouldn't go back now for anything.

The reward is always greater than the risk when you step out in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

So I encourage you learn to take risks as you see opportunities around you. Look with eyes of faith at the potential of what God can do instead of with fear at all the potential difficulties.

3. Encourage each other in our faith.

The ten spies that responded in fear spread their bad report amongst the whole community. Their fear contaminated the rest.

Notice at first they just reported the facts (v 27-29)

Caleb gave a stance of faith (v30)

The men responded to this with fear. Notice too that as they went on they not only continued to express their fear but began to exaggerate the strength and size of the enemy and the difficulties that they faced. (We looked like grasshoppers in our own eyes)

As you read further in chapter 14 they spread their story through the camp which led to widespread grumbling and then rebellion against God by the whole Israelite community which led to them wandering in the wilderness for 40 years before the next generation took hold of what was promised. (Joshua and Caleb were the only ones of that generation to enter the Promised Land)

It is also important to note that this was a sustained position of fear by these guys. It took them 40 days to spy out the land. It wasn't a quick look and then a gut response. They had plenty of time to reflect on the ways God had provided for them in the past and build their faith, even encourage each other. They

came home with a decided position which then spread and contaminated everyone else.

So if fear can spread so can faith!

We should encourage each other to respond with eyes of faith.

We should encourage each other to take risks.

Our obedience can be an encouragement to someone else.

One way we can do this is through testimonies.

If God has done something in your life – tell people.

When the opportunity is given for testimonies don't be slow to respond.

If you have taken a risk and stepped out in faith –share it with us so others can be encouraged to do the same.

Giving a testimony not only demonstrates a heart of thankfulness towards God for what He has done and gives Him the glory He deserves, it is also part of our response of faith.

Testimonies take faith. How many of you have held back on giving a testimony because you want to make sure if the healing lasts first?

Is that a response of faith? No!

Giving a testimony is part of us responding in faith. It does something in you but it also builds faith in us corporately and encourages all of us. What God has done for one He can do for another.

Also our healing wall is a visual reminder to us of God's work of healing amongst us.

Healing cards do not replace a verbal testimony they should accompany it.

Verbal testimonies don't replace healing cards, we need both.

Let us continue to make this a visual testimony of God's work in our midst.

How do we respond when words of knowledge are given here?

The faith of the person that receives the word should rise to the point that they expect that this is their day for healing.

But what about the rest of us? There is a corporate element to words of knowledge being given in our midst. They should cause our faith to rise corporately. We should all be expectant, and have an increased faith that people are going to be healed here. They might not be for us personally but we can believe in faith for and with those they are for and rejoice with them.

We are not islands and we should not think individually – only in as far as how it impacts us.

As we encourage each other our corporate faith level rises.
We need to encourage each other in our faith and our efforts to grow in faith and take risks.

The Presence of God

This is the most important ingredient in anything we do.

'Spiritual Java' by Bill Johnson et al. (page 11)

Faith comes by hearing, not from having heard. It is the listening heart, in the present tense, that is ready for heaven's deposit of faith. The whole nature of faith implies a relationship with God that is current. The emphasis is on hearing – in the now!

Everything I have shared today hinges on this – a listening heart, a current relationship with God. Hearing in the now! We don't move forward on yesterday's bread. We need new bread for a new day.

'Spiritual java' cont...

The Holy Spirit lives in my spirit and in yours. That is our place of communion with God. As we learn to receive from our spirits, we learn how to be spirit led. As we open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit within us, we learn how to operate by faith. ...Faith reflects the realities of God's world into ours. Faith is the substance of the unseen realm.

We need to learn how to co-labour with the Holy Spirit. None of this can be achieved in the flesh. This is something we learn as we do, it is not just theory. To fully understand we need to do.

We will have the maximum impact on our community when all that we do flows from a current relationship with God and a listening heart that is led by the Holy Spirit to acts of faith. This is when God will empower us to transform our community.