



Have you ever planned a trip and thought, “What could go wrong?” So it was the fall of my sophomore year of college. Some friends and I planned a ski trip to Mt. Hood outside of Portland, Oregon. We planned to drive. I would borrow my dad’s mini Ford Courier pick-up and my best friend would take his Toyota Celica. Five of us left Orange County with our bags, skis and poles. I had an old shell on my truck and we put most of the equipment back there. Five of us and two cars and one stop along the way to pick up a friend in Yosemite. What could go wrong?

Two hundred miles up Hwy. 395, my friend’s Toyota groaned to a stop. The engine had froze up. Why? Toyotas never break down. Well, he had added a quart of oil and then promptly forgot to replace the oil cap, and that car wasn’t going anywhere. We towed it to Bakersfield or somewhere and continued our journey. Now in my mini pick-up we had 6 people—3 in the front and 3 in the back. It was January and that was an non-insulated shell, and I had the heat on full blast trying to get heat to them through the little window behind the cab.

As we approached Mt. Hood we picked up our 7th person and now there were 7 of us and all our ski equipment heading to the ski area. On the way it started snowing. I was ready. I had my new chains, everything seemed okay, but then I heard a clang, clang, clang. I just kept going, got to the resort and looked at my fender and there were dents and scrapes and exposed metal on my dad’s truck.

We skied for three days. On the last day, we finish skiing, go to the lodge for something to eat, get ready to pack up to go home, and I can’t find my skis. While in the lodge my skis were stolen. I rushed to my truck to see if one of the other guys might have put my skis in the truck. It was cold and I put the key in the door lock and twisted it and the key snapped in two with the important part of the key lodged in the door. A few hours and one locksmith later, we were on the road.

Then it really began to snow. We learned at a truck stop that the I-5 pass was closed. We couldn’t get home, so we had to make a long detour and drove west to Hwy. 1 and took that south. That’s about 300 miles from the border to San Francisco. Cold, windy, rainy, we had delays due to mud slides. Still not home, we had to get our friend back to Yosemite. We are driving now maybe 50 miles from the valley and it is still raining hard. A boulder the size of a large pumpkin, loosened in the rain, rolled down the hill and crashed into our right fender.

We dropped off our friend and headed home, and I got home about 3 in the morning. Remember, there were no cell phones and no GPS at that time. I told my dad the whole story, “Dad, you wouldn’t believe what happened to you truck on our ski trip.” And you know what—I will never forget it—he believed me and now being a dad about the age he was when this happened, I

would say the same thing, “I am so glad no one got hurt. Things can be replaced. People can’t.”

As we continue our journey through The Story it all seems to make so much sense. The Israelites—released from bondage—are ready to claim the promises of God and enter a land promised to them through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. What could go wrong?

We will base our story in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy means “spoken word.” At least up to Chapter 30 it was written by Moses very late in his life. It was his final eloquent speech looking back on the historical events that he experienced as he wandered in the wilderness with his people for 40 years.

On this map we can see Egypt, the Sinai Peninsula, and Mt. Horeb. We see the desert of Paran and the desert of Zin, we see a place called Kadesh Barnea, we see the Negev, the coast land of Canaan, the mountains around the Dead Sea, Mt. Nebo, a bit of the Jordan River. We don’t see the sea of Galilee, we don’t see farther north into Lebanon or Syria or Iraq. We don’t see the Euphrates River that runs through the Syrian and Iraq border.

What I want to draw your attention to is the stretch between Mt. Horeb and that place called Kadesh Barnea, which was the doorway that opened up to the Promised Land on the western route via the Kings Hwy. What should have been an 11-day journey for the Israelites to get their feet into the Promised Land instead took 40 years.

The Lord our God said to us at Horeb, “You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Break camp and advance into the hill country of the Amorites; go to all the neighboring peoples in the Arabah, in the mountains, in the western foothills, in the Negev and along the coast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the Euphrates. See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land the Lord swore he would give to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and to their descendants after them. ...“Then, as the Lord our God commanded us, we set out from Horeb and went toward the hill country of the Amorites through all that vast and dreadful desert that you have seen, and so we reached Kadesh Barnea” (Deut. 1:6–8, 19).

Can you just imagine the excitement? The awesome display as 3 million or so people made their way across 200 miles of desert, the Desert of Sin, the Desert of Paran, thinking, we won’t be through here again. What an ugly place to raise a family. So they stop in Kadesh Barnea and survey the land before them.

“See, the Lord your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the LORD, the God

of your fathers, told you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged" (1:21).

What happened next? The text says that all the people of Israel came to Moses and said, "Let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us, and bring back a report about the route we are to take and towns we will come to." Moses goes on to say, "Well, the idea seems good to me." Moses sent 12 spies, one from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. They were gone 40 days. It says in Numbers 13 they went through the Negev north all the way up to Hebron, just south of Jerusalem and Bethlehem to a place called the Valley of Eshcol, which means "cluster." It says they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes and two of them carried it back between them. They brought back pomegranates and figs. They saw people. They saw descendants of Anak, which means "neck" in Hebrew, people who were tall. They saw powerful armies, fortified cities. When they returned, they gave their report. 10 of the 12 spies said, "Yes, it does flow with milk and honey, here look at the fruit, when was the last time you saw a grape?" Then they went on to say, "It is filled with not just Anak, but Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites and Canaanites. We can't take it. They are too strong."

Then Caleb, the spy sent from the tribe of Judah, stood up and said in Numbers 13:30, *"Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, 'We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.'"* That night the people raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron and the whole assembly said, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us die by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Let's choose a leader and go back to Egypt." Moses and Aaron fell on their faces. Caleb and Joshua, another spy from the tribe of Ephraim, tore their clothes in grief. There was an out and out rebellion happening.

Why? What was going on? It was a failure to trust God. That is the bottom line to all of this section. If you study these passages, you see a pattern. You find it in Exodus all the way back while camped at the foot of Sinai, when God was up on the mountain with a cloud over the mountain and a glowing Moses descending. You find it in Numbers leading up to the spies' report, and you find it in the 39 years that followed.

A Failure to Trust God is Revealed in How I Live

Do I live in the past?

One of many references of them complaining about their fear of starvation was, "At least we had full stomachs in Egypt." We see over and over again, "The past is better. I'll take Egypt over this." How quickly they forget the brothers and uncles they never knew that were killed when Pharaoh issued an edict that said "all the male Hebrew babies are to be killed," or the slavery they endured. Now they want to go back?

Do I live in the past? If I do, I am crippled in the present. We can be crippled by past negative experiences or past positive experiences. God wants us to move to his leading. Paul says, "I am to forget what is behind and strain forward to what lies ahead." He is saying, I don't have that down yet, but I am putting the past behind. How do we do this? By trusting God. I am so excited that the church that I formerly served in just hired their lead pastor.

It's time for them to forget what is behind and strain forward no matter how different the future may be.

Do I live for the comforts of the moment?

Another example where they desired the comforts over obedience was where the Israelites tested the Lord in the wilderness. In Exodus 17 they were thirsty and they cried out, *"Is the Lord among us or not?"* It was a weird theology. If I am comfortable, not lacking in material things, then God must be with me. If I lack material things, then God must not be with me. He has abandoned me. What a way to live. What about the next day? Who knows what tomorrow will bring? Will God leave me tomorrow? What a terrible way to live.

As World War II was drawing to a close, the Allied armies gathered up many hungry orphans. They were placed in camps where they were well fed. Despite excellent care, they slept poorly. They seemed nervous and afraid. Finally, a psychologist came up with the solution. Each child was given a piece of bread to hold after he was put to bed. This particular piece of bread was just to be held, not eaten. The bread produced wonderful results. The children went to bed knowing instinctively they would have food to eat the next day. That guarantee gave the children a restful and contented sleep.

Might it be that God is teaching trust? To look at our lives and ask ourselves what does it mean for me to own? Jesus is the Bread of Life. Present comforts don't necessarily lead to deeper sleep; it's the assurance that God has our future no matter our present that leads to deeper sleep. And if we are fearful about losing our comforts, our status quo, it might be a failure to trust in a God who wants to take you to his preferred future.

Do I live for things?

A failure to trust is rooted in worship life. What do I worship? At Sinai the Israelites received the 10 Commandments. We are pretty familiar with them. After Moses presented them to the Israelites, he went back up to Sinai to receive more instruction from God. In the meantime, the people thought Moses wasn't coming back, so they said to Aaron, "let's make our own idol to worship." Aaron didn't hesitate, after all he was a leader too. So they took off their jewelry and Aaron melted all of it down and made it into an idol in the shape of a calf. They said, "These are our gods. You have Yahweh and you have this calf. We have two Gods now." In a matter of minutes they broke both the 1st Commandment, "You shall have no other god before me," and the 2nd Commandment, "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything."

The antidote in Exodus 32 was incredibly fast and severe. It says that *"Moses burned the calf and ground the powder and scattered it in the water and made the Israelites drink it."* You know why I think he made them drink it? I think he was saying to them, This satisfies and fills your hunger? All right, eat it and tell me. Does it satisfy your hunger the way God does? Who would you rather trust?

Our idols today don't look like golden calves, they look like a worship of material things, those things the Bible says perishes and rots and moths eat up. We worship success, winning, the fame and celebrity; we worship those who win and perform; we worship looks, body image, youthfulness, what we work so hard

to project to others. We can worship religion, our good work, the feeling we get when others notice what we do.

How do we trust God more? We flee temptation. Did you know Paul refers to the golden calf story in 1 Corinthians 10, when in verse 13 he gives us this famous life-giving verse, *“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”*

We are to flee like Joseph fled Potiphar's wife, but for me over the years, fleeing looks more like turning to God's word. I forget to turn my eyes upon Jesus and look into his wonderful face, and the things of this world grow dim in the light of his glory and grace.

These Israelites struggled to trust because they forgot. I don't know how we can remember without being connected to the Christian community. My community group meets Thursday nights. It's a chance to reflect, remember, and encourage each other in the truths of God and how they apply to life.

A Failure to Trust God is Revealed in How I Think

Do I think the best about me?

We don't hear too much about Miriam and Aaron. But maybe some can relate to their failure to trust. It was hard for them to see Moses steering. After all God set Aaron up to help Moses. Why is Moses the top dog? What about me? Why can't I drive on this trip too? And Miriam, remember she implemented the plan that kept her baby brother alive back in Egypt. She should lead too right? We can lead. We are smart and talented. Three million people know who we are. We are important too. Hasn't God spoken through us? We think you are wrong Moses. You want us to take the people right and we think they should go left. Not only that, you married a Cushite woman.

And God said to them, “When a prophet is among you I speak through visions and dreams, not so with my servant Moses; he is faithful. He is my servant.” All throughout Scripture, God refers to Moses as “My servant.” And right there in Numbers 12:3 it says, *“Now Moses as a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.”*

Do we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to? If we do, it is revealing in us a failure to trust God. Moses was a man of deep trust and deep faith. Read about his faith sometime in Hebrews 11.

Do I think the worst about God?

“The Lord hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us.”

Have you ever thought that God doesn't like you? That if he did, your circumstances would change? Everything we have seen so far in The Story is about a God who loves us and pursues us, who gives the ultimate sacrifice, his son, to save us. God loves the world so much that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life.

Do I think the worst about my situation?

Why wouldn't God just make it easy? Okay, he loves us, so why is my situation so hard? Could it be that God wants to leave no

doubt that his deliverance is not because we are good or deserving, but because of his grace?

“Where can we go? Our brothers have made us lose heart. They say, ‘The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there..’” (1:28).

Back in 1932, newspapers called it the “Dance of Danger”—bridge construction on top of swaying catwalks and high towers, sometimes hundreds of feet in the air, blown by ill winds. This dance had even yielded a calculated fatality rate: for every one million dollars spent, one life would be lost. That was what officials could expect.

Engineers on the Golden Gate Bridge, however, believed the risks could be lowered. When construction began in 1932, numerous safety measures were put into place and strictly enforced: mandatory use of hard hats, prescription filtered eye glasses, no show-boating (cause for automatic firing), tie-off lines, and an on-site hospital helped to greatly reduce the casualty rate. After nearly four years of construction and \$20 million spent, only one worker had died.

The most effective safety device, without question, was as new to bridge building as it was old to the circus: the use of a trapeze net. This large net cost \$130,000 and draped 60 feet below the roadbed under construction, extending 10 feet to either side. So effective was the safety net that the newspapers began running box scores: “Score on the Gate Bridge Safety Net to Date – 8 Lives Saved!” Those men whose lives had been delivered by the net were said to have joined the “Halfway to Hell Club.”

Beyond that, the net had another significant benefit: it freed many of the workers from an often paralyzing sense of fear. And that, many said, helped them work more productively.

In a troubled and frightening world, Scripture tells us of the safety equipment and protections afforded the believer. We have a certain safety net beneath this life's “dance of danger.” What is our safety net in our current dance with danger? God's promises, God's faithfulness, his preferred future for us, his unrelenting love for us. May trusting in these truths lifted from God's Story free us from paralyzing fears. We will not be the people he has called us to be, we will not be the light that shines for all the world to see unless we trust him.

“Then I said to you, ‘Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes...’” (1:30).

The Consequences of Not Trusting God

Trusting God in our Lower Story is so important, such a priority for us, that there are consequences. For us we lose out on seeing God work through us, we lose out on having a contagious faith, we lose out on freedom from fear, freedom to take risks, freedom to know deeply the heart of God. For the Israelites in their story we see this tragic consequence. God said,

“No one from this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your ancestors, except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see it, and I will give him and his descendants the land he set his feet on, because he followed the Lord wholeheartedly.”

Because of you the Lord became angry with me also and said, "You shall not enter it, either. But your assistant, Joshua son of Nun, will enter it. Encourage him, because he will lead Israel to inherit it" (1:35–38).

40 Years in the Desert

"On the twentieth day of the second month of the second year, the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle of the Testimony. The Israelites set out from the Desert of Sinai and traveled from place to place until the cloud came to rest the Desert of Paran" (Num. 10:11). You know that desert you saw before and said, "I'm never coming back here again."? Well, you will not only see it, you will raise your children in it, and because of your lack of trust, you will die in it. Every one of your own generation will perish and never enter the Promised Land. Your kids will see it, your grandkids will see it, but not you. *"The LORD heard you when you wailed, 'If only we had meat to eat! We were better off in Egypt! Now the Lord will give you meat, and you will eat it. You will not eat it for just one day, or two days, or five, ten or twenty days, but for a whole month—until it comes out of your nostrils and you loathe it—because you have rejected the LORD, who is among you, and have wailed before him, saying, 'Why did you every leave Egypt?'"* (Num. 11:18b-20).

"Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of the Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the Lord showed him the whole land... And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in Moab as the LORD had said" (34: 4-5).

A Prayer of Trust

I believe that many of us have done Christianity 101. Our journey has had detours, some fender benders, maybe we tried to drive when we shouldn't have been driving. We can relate to a failure to trust God, but in some way we have and God has proved himself faithful. You think about your prayer life and you say, "yeah, a lot like the Israelites, my prayer life depended on my changing circumstances. I'm hungry, I'm scared, I'm stressed. And yes, I complain to you God, and my prayers are a lot about me."

In one of the most beautiful scenes of this messy season in the history of the wanderings, Moses is inside something he called the Tent of Meeting. He would set it up right outside the camp and would go in and meet with God and pray. Can you relate to

Moses' prayer in the tent? In Exodus 33:12-13 Moses says to the Lord God, *"I know you by name and you have found favor with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you."*

Lord, teach me your ways...

That's it. That's a key to trusting more. A man who wants to trust God more prays, "Teach me your ways." That prayer drives me to absorb God's ways instead of absorbing the ways of the world. It's a Trusting 201 type of prayer. God, you want my heart to change. You are more concerned about my heart trusting you more than you are about my circumstances. I encourage you to pray that prayer every day.

Guarantee to me your presence...

Another key to trusting God more. Be confident, God's presence goes with you. Up until she was 5 or 6 years old my daughter Katie wanted the same "go to bed ritual." She would not go to sleep unless I laid down on the floor next to her bed. When I tried to sneak out, she would pop her head up, "Where are you going?" So to keep me there she made me lay on the floor and I had to drape my hand up onto the bed so she could put her hand on mine. Then I would hear, "Daddy, don't go to sleep until I'm asleep."

Moses is saying to us, I understand fear. I may not be afraid of the dark, but I got a whole bag of other fears and we do too. It might be losing a job, losing health, depression, not being loved, all these things that create crises in our human experience. "My Presence is will go with you, and I will give you rest."

Moses asks one more thing in that tent of meeting. He asks in verse 18, *"Now show me your glory."*

Show me the revelation of your power and your glory...

The key to trusting God more is found in his glory. His name Yahweh, his moral character, his steadfast love, slow to anger, forgiving, absolutely dependable.

Will our faith enlarge if we pray the kind of prayers we typically pray? Probably not. But if our prayers become fortified with prayers like, Teach my your ways, guarantee to me your presence, and show me your glory, our faith will enlarge.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.