



There is something exhilarating about an adventure in the wilderness. For some, this may be a short day hike on the coast, while for others it might mean trekking to the peak of the Matterhorn. No matter what adventure you choose to embark upon there is a period of preparation that must occur. As a teenager, I remember watching the news as a search party rescued a man who became lost on his adventure in the Australian desert. Robert Bogucki, an American citizen, had laid out his plan; he left the Sandfire Roadhouse north of Perth intending to ride his bike and trek across the Great Sandy Desert to Fitzroy Crossing.

Fifteen days into his journey Robert was declared missing. The original search party set out on ATV's and enlisted the help of aboriginal bush trackers, but after twelve days the search was called off. The hope of finding the American tourist, gone missing in Australia, was quickly diminishing. But back in the States, Robert's parents were unwilling to give up on their son and they hired a specialized search team to continue scouring the desert. After 43 days of surviving on muddy water and eating native plants, Robert was finally rescued when a search helicopter spotted his makeshift camp.

Upon extraction from the Great Sandy Desert, Robert was 40 pounds lighter and extremely confused. Later it was discovered that he was on a spiritual journey, desiring to connect with God. It's easy to wonder what went wrong on his journey. We may never know, but what if we asked the same question about our life? Has something gone wrong on our spiritual journey? In the last days, weeks, months or even years, have you grown closer to God, or have you veered off course, become lost and found yourself in need of a drastic rescue?

Open your Bible to Deuteronomy 1. This morning we're going to look at one of Moses' last sermons to the nation of Israel. Last week we studied how God rescued Israel out of Egypt, brought them through the Red Sea on dry land with Pharaoh in hot pursuit, and led them to the base of Mount Sinai where He spoke with Moses. While the people waited at the base of the mountain, Moses spent 40 days with God receiving the most important set of guidelines ever given: the Ten Commandments.

Israel spent a total of eleven months at the base of Mount Sinai. They learned to trust God to lead them in a pillar of fire by night and a cloud during the day. A huge part of their journey involved relying on God to provide them with food called manna. Six days a week God placed this food on the ground for the

Israelites to gather. No, they didn't eat In and Out on the seventh day! The sixth day was a day of building trust. On the sixth day they were to gather twice as much so that they had food on the seventh day and could obey the Sabbath. Their journey was sprinkled with disobedience and ultimately led to them wandering in the desert for 40 years. Let's go to Deuteronomy to find out what happened.

### **Eviction Notice**

Deuteronomy is the last of the five books of the Pentateuch. Deuteronomy literally means "second law;" the entire book is Moses giving the Law again to the Israelites.

**These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel in the wilderness east of the Jordan—that is, in the Arabah, (Deut. 1:1a).**

The purpose of Deuteronomy was to call this new generation of Israel to covenant renewal, to a reaffirmation of the arrangement between the Lord and His people.

**In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses proclaimed to the Israelites all that the Lord had commanded him concerning them (1:3).**

It can be confusing to read the book of Deuteronomy because Moses is addressing the Israelites as a nation, but this time it's a new generation of people. The whole book of Deuteronomy is Moses teaching this new generation not to make the same mistake their parents made. Moses is speaking to second generation Israelites who left Egypt.

Deuteronomy is teaching for people who find themselves on a threshold with possibilities and challenges before them. It's not just a rehashing of the old, but it's taking the old and applying it to a whole new situation. After 40 years of wandering, this group is on the brink of taking possession of the Promised Land. But are they ready? Are they prepared to take the land and live in it as God's distinct people? Are they ready to move from fear to faith, from being a group of wandering nomads to being people with a home?

As we study our text, it's important to remember who Moses is speaking to. Moses is restating the Law to the children of those who experienced the Exodus but were forbidden from entering the land. These people have wandered the desert for 40 years because of their parents' disobedience and Moses reminds them of this.

East of the Jordan in the territory of Moab, Moses began to expound this law, saying:

**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” (1:5–8).**

Moses is reminding them of the eviction notice their parents were given. God didn't want them to get comfortable in the desert but wanted them to advance and occupy the Promised Land.

### **A Glimpse into the Promised Land**

Moses shares all of this to preface the reason for the wandering journey. We know the Israelites were commanded to leave Mount Sinai and occupy the Promised Land. You might be wondering, “If God called them to take the land, how come they ended up wandering in the desert for 40 years?” When Israel reached the edge of the Promised Land, Moses said this.

**Then I said to you, “You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the Lord our God is giving us” (1:20).**

What a great military charge: Go take the land, God has given it to you, don't be afraid! God called Israel to leave the edges and enter the land. Sometimes we linger at the edges of what God has called us to for too long. Maybe we get scared, maybe fear creeps in. So instead of advancing, we linger. The Israelites lingered here.

Israel decided to have spies go check out the land. It wasn't a bad idea and Moses even agreed that it was a good idea, but it wasn't God's plan. Did you know that? Did you know it was never in God's original plan for Israel to send spies into the land?

**Then all of you came to me 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 the towns we will come to.”**

**The idea seemed good to me; so I selected twelve of you, one man from each tribe (1:22–23).**

I was reading my daughters' Children's Bible to them the other morning, and the way it's written makes it sound like it was God's plan to send spies into the land. For my whole life I thought God was the one who commissioned the spies to scout out the land, but it doesn't seem that way. C.S. Lewis says this: “There are two kinds of people: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, ‘All right, then, have it

your way.’” This is an example where God allowed the people to make their choice.

God had given Israel the land. Their response was to go up and take the land, but they wanted to send spies into the land to get a better understanding of it. We can't shame them for wanting to do so. In reality Israel wasn't outfitted for a war of this magnitude. They may have had the manpower but they didn't have the military training like the nations they would possess. Their reliance needed to be on God who would do the battle. They needed to trust in the promises of God; the same God who rescued them from oppression in the land of Egypt.

So the twelve spies entered the land and spent the next 40 days scouting it out. I imagine them being on a Navy Seal recon mission, going undetected in the land of their enemies. After 40 days they returned to the rest of the Israelites and brought with them some of what the land had to offer. Imagine Caleb saying: “The land is exactly how God described it! There is plenty of food, water and the soil is rich!” Before he can even end his sentence, Joshua jumps in and says: “And look at this bunch of grapes!” The Bible tell us the bunch of grapes they brought back was so large it took two men to carry (Numbers 13:23). Can you imagine grapes that big? Joshua and Caleb trusted in God but unfortunately the other ten spies did not.

Did you know trusting in God is a huge part of the Christian life? If you take away one thing from this morning's message, remember this: Trust God on the journey. Two and half years ago I was sitting in Las Vegas having coffee with Rob Hall, CPC's North Campus pastor. Rob began telling me about what God was doing here on the Peninsula. He began sharing Vision 2020 and the desire the Elders had to reach 5,000 people by 2020. As we sat in the hot sun, sipping our cold drinks, I blurted out these words: “That sounds awesome, do you have a role for me?” Have you ever said something and then thought, “Where did that come from?”

We began the application process with CPC and entered conversations with the Elders. We even came and visited CPC for a couple of days. Charity and I were trying to trust God in this whole process and figure out where He was calling us. We sensed our time in Las Vegas was done but we weren't sure where God was leading us next. I remember the night I knew God was calling us to the Peninsula. It was like this huge relief of knowing where God was leading us but with a huge question mark over what it would all look like. I wanted to have complete control but I knew it was impossible; God was deepening my trust in Him. I vividly remember signing my offer letter from CPC. Then I remember scouring the internet thinking, “What are we doing? Housing is crazy there.” I had to let go and give complete control to God on this journey.

The new level of trust God was calling me to wasn't done yet. We had probably been here for about three weeks and we were walking in Central Park in San Mateo when my wife gently asked: "Do you like it here? Do you think we'll stay?" At first I wasn't sure how to respond. My mind was racing with things like: Does she not like it? Does she want to leave? Is what I thought was God's call just bad Mexican food? I looked my wife in the eyes and told her: "I love it here and I trust this is where God has called us." She let out this sigh of relief and said: "I feel the same way, I just want to make sure you're happy." We've been here for over two years now and still feel the same way. The lesson of trust isn't complete; God has been teaching us about trusting Him more as we grow in our walk with Christ.

### **Rebellion = Inevitable Disaster**

Let's go back to the Israelites and see how their trust journey is going. God gave Israel the eviction notice and showed them the Promised Land. This is the part in the story where it goes bad.

**But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the Lord your God. You grumbled in your tents and said, "The Lord hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us. Where can we go? Our brothers have made our hearts melt in fear. 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'" (1:26–28).**

What went wrong with these people? What is wrong with us? We sometimes think the problem is people don't believe in God; that they've rejected the idea of God altogether. Or we think the problem is that people don't believe in right and wrong and there are no moral absolutes. Some Christians say that's the real problem in our society and if we let the atheists and liberals run our country, we're doomed. All of this is smoke and mirrors. These aren't the problems. The more digging we do and the more time we take to figure it out, the real problem is: we think He hates us. Now I don't think someone is going to come right out and say this, but the more layers we pull away, the clearer it becomes and the text just helps us acknowledge it.

Once the real problem had been exposed, Moses tried to remind the people about all God had done for them on their journey. He reminded them that the Lord would fight for them. He reminded them how God had already fought for them in the desert, but it was all useless. The Israelites were convinced God hated them. I can't imagine them thinking God hated them after all He had done for them. He provided manna for their food. When they asked for meat He brought in more quail than a person could handle, but it wasn't enough for them.

Since they thought God hated them, His anger finally flared and He swore no one from that generation would enter the land. The

people wouldn't enter the land for their disobedience. Miriam wouldn't enter the land and neither would her brother Aaron. Moses wouldn't enter because of his disobedience. The only ones from that generation who would enter the Promised Land were Caleb and Joshua who trusted in God on the journey and believed what He said.

Once the good thing had been pulled from them, they thought they could possess the land on their own. Look how Israel acted in their disobedience.

**Then you replied, "We have sinned against the Lord. We will go up and fight, as the Lord our God commanded us." So every one of you put on his weapons, thinking it easy to go up into the hill country.**

**But the Lord said to me, "Tell them, 'Do not go up and fight, because I will not be with you. You will be defeated by your enemies'" (1:41–42).**

For Israel to attempt war in God's name without God's presence would bring inevitable disaster. God told them not to go, but they refused to listen and took a massive beating from the Amorites. For this generation, disobedience meant death. Their children, who they feared would be taken captive, are the ones who will now possess the Promised Land. Imagine the discouragement Moses felt. He had seen, firsthand, God redeem Israel, and now he is watching a disaster right before his eyes. Finally they leave the edge of the Promised Land to wander in the desert; a year for every day the spies were in the land.

While wandering, the Israelites once again quarreled with Moses. There was no water and they began saying things like, "You should have left us in Egypt, at least we had fresh food and water there." Moses then met with God, who instructs Moses to speak to the rock so that water would come flowing out, enough water for everyone to drink. Moses took his staff, approached the rock and struck it two times. Water came gushing out and everyone's thirst was quenched. Although the lack of water was solved, there was a new problem. God didn't command Moses to strike the rock, He told him to speak to the rock and water would gush out. This was Moses' disobedience.

Even in their deep rebellion God wasn't about to let this nation become extinct. This generation would pass away, but God remained faithful in His commitment to His people. I appreciate what Zac Poonen said: "It is possible to miss God's perfect will for our lives through carelessness or disobedience."

Before you get discouraged, remember: there is hope. The opposite of rebellion is what we talked about earlier: trust. Now this is pretty obvious, but trusting God on the journey is difficult. You may be thinking, I could have told you that, but we need to start with the obvious. For Israel it was impossible to think God could defeat those huge people living in the Promised Land. They had a difficult time trusting God. Trust is difficult for us because at

some point in your life, you trusted someone and they hurt you. Then you trusted again and got hurt again. The more hurt you experience, the more difficult trust becomes. Trust is difficult with God. At some point you feel like God let you down. You feel like God hurt you and broke your trust. Although you haven't said it, you may be like the Israelites and think He hates you. This is a problem. I love what David Crowder says in one of his songs: "Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can't heal."

Now if you're going to trust God on the journey and trust is difficult, you need to deal with your inability to trust God. I think trusting God on the journey is releasing control. The Israelites wanted to be in control. They didn't enter the land because they wanted to protect their children from these scary people; they didn't enter the land because they couldn't release control. Where do you need to release control to God? In your work you may do a great job, but sometimes you think you are unethical to secure a deal. Start acting ethical and releasing control to God in these deals. Let God provide for you, trust He can provide for you. Is your prayer life on the safe side? Stop praying for good weather and the Niners to win. Release control in your prayer life and start praying huge prayers that increase your trust in God. One final thought on releasing control. If you're in a dating situation, avoid moving in with each other until you're married. Premarital sex and cohabitation is ruining the sanctity and holiness of marriage. Release control and trust God in this area of your life. You can't have complete control and trust God; it's an oxymoron.

Here is what happens when you release control—you experience joy. Trusting God on the journey equals joy. Just hearing this stresses out some of you: you have to be in control. But the hope of joy should outweigh the desire for control. Those of you who have done this know what I'm talking about. If you haven't experienced this joy, it can be tough to explain. It's probably like someone who has summited Mount Everest trying to explain the view to someone who hasn't; it's tough to put it into words. I'm not talking about happiness, which is based on our circumstances. I'm talking about a deep seeded joy that comes from releasing control and trusting God. Trusting God even when it seems crazy. Following His path even when you can't see the

end. Listening to His voice over your logic. Choosing holiness over happiness.

Even though we leave the Israelites on the edge of the Promised Land, there is something they never experienced that we can. Our hope is in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who came on the most intense journey ever known to man. He came to lead us to a place He is preparing for us. If you've never trusted in Jesus Christ, it can seem difficult. It can be difficult to think about trusting in a Man who died on a cross for your sins. It means releasing control and trusting in Him as your Savior. You've already realized you cannot continue doing what you are doing on your own; you need someone to save you. And if you do trust in Jesus, which I hope you do, there is an unspeakable joy that you will experience on your journey.

I want to close this morning with this: All of us are on a spiritual journey of some kind. We don't have to travel to Australia to begin our journey with God, we can start right here and right now. In fact our journey has already begun. We live in a place that is in desperate need of a Savior. We need to trust God in the journey because there are others around us who are watching our lives to see if we will. They know we have placed our trust in Christ as our Lord and Savior, but what they are looking for is to see if this shows in our actions. In other words, is our walk with Christ the real deal, or is it superficial and ready to fall down the moment we get scared to act on what God is asking us to do?

Although this may be scary and we may feel like we are stuck in the desert, let's continue the journey knowing God is trustworthy. Let's continue the trust journey knowing God doesn't hate us but loves us deeply. We can press ahead so that we don't make the same mistake we saw the Israelites made. Our lives can be models of trust to those around us. We may not be famous but we can be trustworthy. So the question I leave you with is: Will you trust Him? Will you release control and allow yourself to trust in His love on the journey?

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

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