

Caleb: Living With the Wait



SABBATH—OCTOBER 2

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S LESSON: Numbers 13; Numbers 14; Joshua 14; Judges 1:12–15.

MEMORY VERSE: “I wait for the Lord to help me. I wait with more longing than those on guard duty wait for the morning. I’ll [I will] say it again. I wait with more longing than those on guard duty wait for the morning. Israel, put your hope in the Lord, because the Lord’s love never fails. He sets his people completely free. He himself will set Israel free from all of their sins” (Psalm 130:6–8, NIV).

CALEB LIVED THROUGH THE BEST OF TIMES AND THE WORST OF TIMES. He knew what slavery was. Caleb was there when the Lord delivered (freed) His people from Egypt with great power. He saw the sea open before Israel and swallow the Egyptian army. He was with Israel at Mount Sinai and saw Moses come down from the mountain with God’s law. He was one of the first to see the land of Canaan. But Caleb had to spend the best years of his life wandering in the desert with the Israelites. And he watched all the Israelites of his generation¹ die there too. At last, as an old man, Caleb is able to enter the land of Canaan. Even then he shows courage and faith in God.

Caleb is a leader who works more behind the scenes and less in front of the audience.² This week we will learn from his gentle leadership style. We will get to know Caleb as a great leader willing to take risks and to lead by example. He is someone who gives freely and encourages leadership in younger people. Caleb has many positive character traits.³ We will study his story to learn what it can teach those of us who live at the end of earth’s history. This is important to us while we wait to cross over into the Canaan of heaven.

1. generation—a group of people born and living during the same time.

2. audience—a group of people who gather together to listen to something or to watch something, such as a musical event or a play.

3. character traits—qualities, such as being honest and faithful, that make a person who he or she is.

SUNDAY—OCTOBER 3**“THE FACTS”
(Numbers 13:26–14:2)**

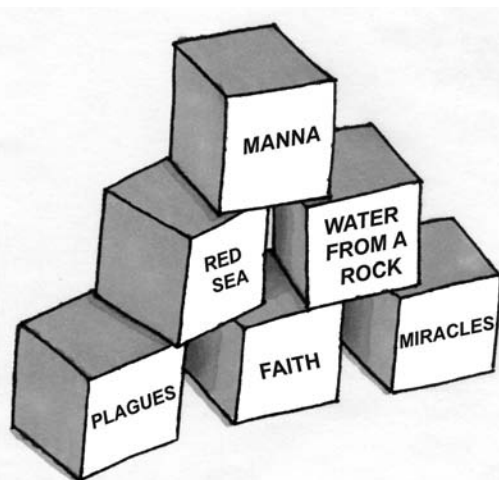
The Israelites set up their tents in the desert of Paran near the border of Canaan about 15 months after they left Egypt. They were excited about the land that would soon become their home. With God’s leading, 12 explorers were chosen to spy out the land. Caleb was chosen to represent Judah as one of the 12 sent on a fact-finding mission⁴ to Canaan. The spies spent 40 days studying the new land. Finally they returned and prepared to give their report.

From Numbers 13:26–14:2, what lesson can we learn about living by faith and not by sight?

The spies bring back something that they can see, smell, and taste. All 12 of them were exposed to the same facts. But they have very different ideas about what those facts mean. Ten of them interpret⁵ the fertile⁶ land and great cities to mean that they are doomed. They decide that there is no way these Israelites can take over the land. They seem to forget the miracles⁷ of the plagues in Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, the water from a rock, and the daily manna⁸ that they received for more than a year. God did all of these

things for them. And now, for some reason, they fail to trust in God and His promises. They depend on what they see instead of what God has promised. How easy it is for all of us to do the same thing!

What we see, and how we interpret what we see, can have very personal results. Our interpretations of facts form the building blocks of our daily decisions (choices). These facts are often influenced by⁹ our feelings. Many people may think that we can believe whatever we want without being affected by those beliefs. This idea is not true.



Our interpretation of facts form the building blocks of our daily decisions (choices).

Facing the facts without God’s Word (the Bible) will lead us away from God and toward faithlessness. Facing the facts with God will help us to trust God and strengthen our faith in Him.

4. mission—a task or job someone is given to do.

5. interpret—to understand (something) to have a certain meaning.

6. fertile—producing many plants or crops; able to support the growth of many plants.

7. miracles—unusual or wonderful events caused by the power of God.

8. manna—food that was supplied by a miracle to the Israelites after they escaped from Egypt.

9. influenced by—to be affected or changed by the power of another person or thing.

Why is it harder to have faith than it is to trust in what we can see? When was the last time you faced something like Caleb did? What did you decide to do? What did you learn from the experience about trusting in God and His promises?

MONDAY—OCTOBER 4

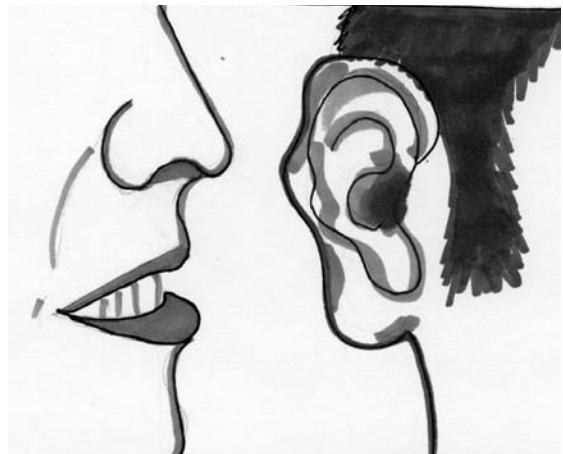
STANDING TALL WHEN IT COUNTS (Numbers 13:30)

It is not always easy to stand out and stand tall. Group pressure is powerful. The power of thousands of fans cheering wildly for their team may be enough to upset and confuse the opposing team. Not many of us would be foolish enough to shout for the opposing team in the face of such loyal fans. This is the reason why supporters of opposing teams at events such as soccer games often are kept apart during the games. When the opposing fans do meet, fights often break out.

But this was no game for the Israelites. It seemed that their future and their lives were once again threatened. And they all started weeping (crying). To see thousands of people crying must have been very touching. And this is when Caleb, who normally stays in the background, steps forward.

In Numbers 13:30, what can we learn about Caleb and about trusting in God's promises from what he said?

The same information can be given in many ways. How we say something is just as important as what we say. Caleb shows a lot of strength by not arguing with or insulting the 10 faithless spies in public. He does not scold the people for their lack of faith. Instead, Caleb speaks with courage and calls for trust and action. But the people do not want to hear this. They have made up their minds. They try to stone Moses, Joshua, and Caleb.



How we say something is as important as what we say.

What does Numbers 14:1–10, 20–24 say about the result of refusing to accept God's Word and of making a wrong interpretation of the "facts"?

Caleb must have been very disappointed. He had seen the good land. He was faithful and ready to enter. But now he must wander in the desert for 40 years because of everyone else's lack of faith. But Caleb has a strong sense of community.¹⁰ He understands

¹⁰ community—a feeling of wanting to be with other people or of caring about the other people in a group.

what it means to be part of a whole. He leads by example and encourages others. Caleb does not break away and start a new movement. The spirit of simply leaving a situation when things get too hard or when there is trouble is not supported by the Bible. In Caleb we find a man who sticks it out when times get difficult. He does not quit or give up, even during the years of punishment. And he does all of this without a spirit of “I told you so.”

In what ways have you suffered from other people’s bad choices? How did you act in these situations?

TUESDAY—OCTOBER 5

CLAIMING GOD’S PROMISES (Joshua 14)

Forty years have passed. The Israelites have crossed over the Jordan into the Promised Land. They seem like hungry people eyeing a table loaded with good food. They look carefully at the Promised Land. The people sit around campfires at night and discuss where the best land is and who is going to get it. Long before entering the Promised Land, Moses thought about the possible infighting that would take place among the tribes. He left directions for the way the land was to be divided up. This plan is discussed in Joshua 14.

What does Caleb ask for in

Joshua 14? Why do you think he asks for it? What does this tell us about him and his faith?

The dividing of the land is going on. Caleb steps forward and, surprisingly, asks for land. This is not to be land for his tribe but for himself. At first, this meeting between Joshua and Caleb, the two oldest men in Israel, may seem a little strange. Caleb claims that he is strong and ready for battle. But, most of all, Caleb wants to claim a promise given to him by God.

Caleb is not afraid to claim God’s promises. What Caleb is asking for is not selfish at all. He strongly believes in the principle (rule) of “getting to give.” Caleb does not make claim to the nicest, richest land. Instead, he chooses for himself the place where Anak’s sons—the giants—live. These are the same giants that made the Israelites so afraid 40 years earlier (Numbers 13:33).

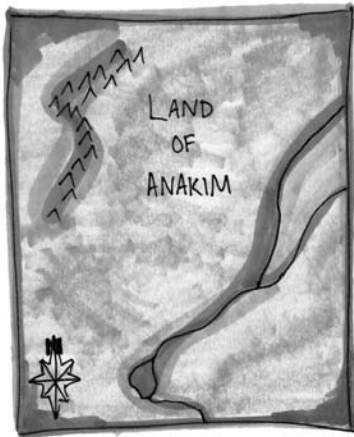
Caleb does not want the current generation to make the same mistakes their fathers made. Now Caleb shows his faith in God by choosing the most challenging land to conquer¹¹ instead of the easiest land to conquer.

Once again, Caleb is leading by example. He becomes a living lesson to those around him. It is the same as saying: “If God can use me, one of the oldest men among you, to drive out the giants, then the rest of you need not fear. God can and will give the victory.”¹² Joshua 15:13, 14

11. conquer—to take control of (a country, city, land) through the use of force.

12. victory—success in defeating an opponent or enemy.

shows Caleb's victory over Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmi, the children of Anak. What had made a whole nation deathly afraid was defeated by one old man who trusted in God's power.



Caleb shows his faith in God by asking for the most challenging land to conquer.

In Joshua 14:14 what does it mean to serve the Lord “wholeheartedly”? What kind of things in our lives (if we do not let go of them) will make this difficult for us to do?

WEDNESDAY—OCTOBER 6

PASSING ON THE LEGACY¹³ (Judges 1:12, 13)

In some cultures,¹⁴ old age is highly respected. The younger members of society¹⁵ come to the older ones for advice and wisdom. In other societies, older people are ignored and kept apart from the rest of society. The second view seems to be grow-

ing around the world. Caleb gives a wonderful example of the positive use of one's old age.

Caleb avoids acting the way a lot of older people are expected to act. He does not let anyone tell him what to do just because he is old. He does not simply give up on life and withdraw. He does not use his age as an excuse for not being involved in his community. And he does not hang on to his position and believe that all attempts of younger people to lead are personal threats against him and his power.

What does Psalm 92:12–15 say about old age?

People say that God has no grandchildren—only sons and daughters. But as long as God remains only the God of their fathers, some believe He has nothing to do with each of them as individual people. Caleb knows that every generation must have its own experience with God. The Israelites, as a group and as individuals, could not live off of the miracles of Egypt, or even the experience of their parents in the wilderness. Caleb believes it is his duty to create a place for the younger generation to take their first steps of faith.

What kind of experience is Caleb helping to create in Judges 1:12, 13? How does he do this?

13. legacy—something (such as property or money) that is received from someone who has died.

14. cultures—the beliefs, customs, or arts of a particular society, group, place, or time.

15. society—people who live together in organized communities with shared laws, traditions, and values.



Caleb believes it is his duty to create a place for the younger generation to take their first steps of faith.

The people of Judah are taking control of their land. The tribes of Judah and Simeon cooperate and work together in faith in order to make good on God's promises. But then they come up against the strong city of Kirjathsepher (verse 12). It is here that they face a great challenge. We know from archaeology¹⁶ that the forts in Palestine during the late Bronze Age were very strong. But Caleb does not focus on how hard it will be to break through the walls of the fort. Instead, he thinks of this challenge as an opportunity (chance) for growth. It is a place where someone can claim God's promises and have the victory. While it may sound strange to us today, Caleb makes an offer to the young soldiers that sounds wonderful to them: whoever conquers the city will become Caleb's son-in-law. Othniel, Caleb's nephew (Judges 1:13), accepts the challenge, and God gives him vic-

tory. Through Caleb's teaching and example, a new hero is born. Caleb's investment¹⁷ would pay rich dividends¹⁸ in later years. God would use Othniel as the first judge and deliverer of Israel (Judges 3:7–11).

As you have grown older, how have your attitudes (thoughts and feelings) changed? What have you learned by simply having more years of experience? How can you avoid letting the years enslave you more deeply to wrong habits and attitudes?

THURSDAY—OCTOBER 7

GIVING FREELY (Judges 1:14, 15)

What does Judges 1:14, 15 tell us about the character¹⁹ of Caleb?

Inheritance²⁰ was very important to the Israelites. Owning land to pass on to younger family members was thought of as a way of making sure that the legacy of a person would not die out. This was so important that many laws were made to provide an heir for a man who died without children. In this way, someone would take the dead man's name and continue his legacy (see the Levirate laws²¹ in Deuteronomy 25:5–10).

16. archaeology—a science that deals with past human life and activities by studying the bones, tools, and so on, of people who lived in the past.

17. investment—the amount of time or energy that is given to something.

18. dividends—an advantage (profit) or benefit that you get because of something you have done.

19. character—the way someone thinks, feels, and behaves.

20. inheritance—money, property, and so on, that is received from someone when that person dies.

21. Levirate laws—in Bible times the closest male family member of a dead man could marry the dead man's widow to keep the property (land) in the family.

At Caleb's age, he must have thought very seriously about the inheritance he would leave his family. The later records of Caleb's family history show that he had sons. He would have been eager to leave to them as much land and as many possessions as possible. Caleb also had a daughter named Acsah. But any land that Caleb gave to her would leave his family as soon as she married and became part of her husband's property. We do not know what led Acsah to ask for land. But we do know that refusing her request would have been acceptable and in line with the social rules of protecting the family inheritance.

The surprising thing is that Caleb gives her a field and springs of water too. And not just one spring of water but both the upper and lower springs.

Generosity²² works both ways. Proverbs 11:25 shows that "anyone who gives a lot will succeed. Anyone who renews others will be renewed" (NIRV). When we are not ready to give freely, it may be a sign that we have not yet received what God has freely offered us.

How could this story be used to teach us about forgiveness? Read Matthew 6:15 and Matthew 18:21–35.

We can give only what we have. If we are unable to forgive, then it is a sure sign that we have not claimed

God's forgiveness for ourselves. Caleb received blessings from God and was happy to share them. He showed a kindness and a giving spirit that went far beyond what was expected of people in his time.

How generous (giving) are you with what you have? Do you find that the more you have, the more willing you are to share with others? Or are you selfish? How can you learn to be more willing to give of yourself for the good of others?

FRIDAY—OCTOBER 8

ADDITIONAL STUDY: "Caleb's faith now was just the same as when his story had opposed [gone against] the evil report of the spies. He had believed God's promise that He would help His people take over Canaan. And in this he had followed the Lord fully. Caleb had stayed with his people during the long wandering in the wilderness. He shared the disappointments and burdens of the guilty. But he made no complaint of this. He honored the mercy²³ of God that had protected him in the wilderness when his fellow countrymen were cut off. Through all the hardships, dangers, and diseases of the desert wanderings, and during the years of warfare since entering Canaan, the Lord had protected Caleb. And now at the age of 80, Caleb was still strong. He did not ask for himself a land already conquered. He asked

22. generosity—being kind, understanding, and not selfish.

23. mercy—kind or forgiving treatment of someone who could be treated harshly.

only for the place that the spies had thought was not possible to conquer. By the help of God, Caleb would take away this stronghold from the very giants whose power had weakened the faith of Israel. It was not the desire for honor or glory²⁴ that made Caleb do this. The brave old warrior just wanted to give the people an example that would honor God. He wanted to encourage the tribes fully to conquer the land which their fathers had said could not be defeated.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*,²⁵ pages 512, 513.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ As Christians, we are always given facts that put our faith to the test, especially in the way we interpret²⁶ those facts. Notice that the key word is *interpret*. What are some ways that we can face these challenges without making fools of ourselves but at the same time remaining honorable and loyal to our beliefs?

❷ Think more about the idea that how we interpret facts is not always correct. For example, we look at matter and see it as solid. But, really, matter is almost all empty space. We look at the ground and judge it to be unmoving. But it is moving very quickly through space. We can be in a closed, empty room and hear nothing. But the air in the room is filled with radio waves carrying all kinds of sounds that we cannot hear. What lessons can we learn from this about what it means to live by faith and not by sight?

❸ Learning from the life of Caleb, how can we encourage new believers, young people, and children to fill positions of leadership and responsibility²⁷ in our church?

❹ Caleb remained loyal to his people, in spite of their terrible sins and mistakes. What lessons does this teach us as Seventh-day Adventists today?

24. glory—public praise, honor, and fame.

25. patriarchs and prophets—patriarchs were leaders of God’s people in early Bible times, men such as Abraham and Isaac, or other leaders of Israel, such as Moses; prophets are men or women who are spokespersons for God.

26. interpret—to explain the meaning of something.

27. responsibility—a duty or task that you are required or expected to do.