

# “To the Power of Ten”

Numbers 13:1-3, 25-35; 14:1-4



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And the ten said,

**“The land we explored there devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.”**

The Nephilim were legendary warriors who were huge in size. The book of Genesis, in the story of Noah, talks about angels who mated with earthly women and created this super race of warriors. In Hebrew lore, Goliath was thought to be a son of Anak. The 10 spies said they saw lots of Nephilim over there. Have you ever noticed when people get together in fear how the fears can grow and develop? One says, “Did you see that one guy over there? He must have been ten feet tall!” Another says, “In general, I’d say they were a lot bigger than us. I’ve heard there are actually Nephilim over there. So who knows if Mr. Anak over there doesn’t have three big brothers!” Then one says, “We’d be like grasshoppers against them...get squashed like bugs. I think that’s what we ought to tell Moses. Let’s tell him, ‘Nice idea, but no go.’”

*When I was a little boy, we lived in a renovated civil war schoolhouse on a state highway. On the back of our 900 sq.ft. house was an enclosed porch. There was a Native American who walked by our house each day. He never smiled or responded when we would call out to him. One night dad was out of town. There was a window from our bedroom into the porch. I looked out there and I saw “the Indian” sleeping there. I woke up my little brother and he saw the Indian, too. We crawled back in our beds, hiding under our covers, scared to death. The next morning, we looked and he wasn’t there. Out back we had a model A that dad had restored. We wondered, “Could the Indian be in the Model A?” So we got my mom and little sister to come go out there with us. You have to picture it – a 25-year old mom with three kids 9, 7 and 5, and I am carrying a little orange wiffle ball bat to defend the family. Of course, “the Indian” was not there. Mom still asks the question of us with a glint in her eye, “Do you remember the Indian on our back porch?” Could my brother and I have imagined it? We’ll never know.”*

One of the questions from God’s Word for us is, “Will we be shaped more by our fears or our faith?” Another ways to say it is, “Will we magnifying our fears and anxieties or will we in the words of the Psalmist, “magnify the Lord?”

In a recent staff retreat, we listed some of the giants, real and perceived, that we would face in doing this campaign and making a permanent presence for our southwest campus. Here are just some of the ones we listed.

- \* Giant #1: A Difficult Past Campaign – will history repeat itself?
- \* Giant #2: Will the Southwest Campus advance happen to the demise of the Memphis campus?
- \* Giant #3: We haven’t done something this ambitious since 1979. Can we do it?
- \* Giant #4: What if it doesn’t work?

The second thing we did in the staff retreat was entitled, “Teaching ‘Grasshopper’ Kung Fu.” Some of you may remember David Carradine in the TV series, Kung Fu. As a little boy he was called “grasshopper.”

How do the grasshoppers take on these giants.

\*Will history repeat itself? Which history? Yes, we have learned some difficult lessons in the first campaign, but the church ended up doing quite well. Beside its not the only time we have been daring in our history. St. Luke's would not be here and this sanctuary would not be here. When St. Luke's people are together in faith and action, God does more than we could ask or think. That's where I would like us to repeat history. Amen?

\*Will the Southwest be the demise of the Memphis? The Memphis campus has made a great investment of people and funds in the development of the southwest campus, and we have felt it. It will only be our demise if we say that it is, if we decide to do that and not embrace the missionary challenge from God at this campus. I believe giving birth to the second campus is a sign of our health and future prosperity at the Memphis, not our demise. This giant will only become real if we make him real.

\*It's been 28 years since we've done something this big. To that giant, we say, "It's about time!"

\*What if it doesn't work? I will be the first to tell you that there are no guarantees in what we are about together. But I can guarantee what will happen if we are not a people of visionary and daring faith and obedience. For the sake of the thousands we will reach for Christ, the risk is worth it. And 5, 10 and 20 years from now, we will look back and say the same thing.

But the people in the book of Numbers chose to listen to the 10 fear-minded spies. In the end, the fears of the ten became contagious among the people and the people cried out, "Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" At least the food and water was provided there. At least they knew what to expect. Never mind that what really was back there was their slavery. Never mind that what was before them was God and his promises. And the bible records that God was not a happy camper. The result was that what should have been a six-month journey ended up taking 40 years as the children went around in circles in the Sinai peninsula. And none of the ten or any of the people of the generation who went through the Red Sea went into "the promised land," except for two, Joshua and Caleb. Scholars have discovered that what they did was follow wherever the water was closest and where the risk was lowest. I regret to tell you that the decision of the people to follow the 10 on the journey of what is predictable, comfortable and lowest risk is the decision the majority of American churches are making. And all they are doing is going around in circles, doing what they have always done, one generation from their own extinction.

But there was another choice they could have made, the one God invites us to in this campaign. And it was represented in two men, Joshua and Caleb. Caleb said, "**We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.**" Caleb chose to be motivated not by fear, but by trust and possibility. In that same staff retreat, Matt led us into a time of dream of what St. Luke's Lubbock could become. We dreamed of two thriving campuses, of a ministry that reaches and develops children and youth and young adults for leadership in our world, of hundreds and thousands of people meeting Jesus Christ as Lord, of St. Luke's Lubbock being known for always being at the edge of what God is doing, and the dreams went on. What possibilities do you see? What impact for Christ do you think God is calling us to? Today, I want to share with you two preliminary pictures of the possibilities as far as what we dream for the southwest campus. The first picture is the floor plan. You will notice that it includes a multi-purpose center that will house specially designed worship space, as well as space for recreation and fellowship. Because the southwest campus is 1/3 children and because we believe that ratio will hold steady there are surrounding classrooms and a large gathering area that will be a center piece for all that develops in the future. What might it look on the outside? I'm so glad you asked. This is the preliminary picture of what the first unit of St. Luke's Southwest will look like on the outside. Hasn't our building committee done a great job? And our building finance consultants tell us after reviewing our giving for three years, that we are a slightly above normal congregation, and that this is doable. That remains to be seen, but what might God do if we see God's Vision and give ourselves fully to God's Mission?

In that staff retreat, after facing the giants, learning a little Kung Fu, and seeing the possibilities, we

as a staff said with one voice, “We’re going in to the promised land together.” We shared that would mean taking on the giants and that we would need to be unified and there for one another, that wherever differences were there love and reconciliation would be there all the more. The leaders who have stood before you are also today committing themselves to going in. We invite you to make the same move. In doing so, here is what we ask. First, we ask you to pray that every person in St. Luke’s will be faithful to God’s call in this effort. John Wesley taught, “Nothing happens, except by prayer.” We agree. This is God’s work, not just ours. Keep those tent cards front and center as you eat dinner and as you have your own times of prayer. Second, we ask that you get involved. In your brochure, there is a place for you to sign up for the area in which you would like to serve. If every one does a little the burden is light and the joy is multiplied. Turn to the person next to you and say, “You are a crucial part of this venture of faith.” We want no one to be left out for each of you is part of the faith, hope and love of St. Luke’s Lubbock. Third, we ask you to enjoy this. Be part of the excitement, the expectancy, and the dynamic power of the Spirit when people take steps of daring faith together. And you’re saying, “You haven’t even mentioned money, yet.” We all know that is coming, but not yet. It’s time pray, get involved and enjoy this journey of faith with Christ. For

“We are bound for the promised land,  
We are bound for the promised land.  
Oh, who will come and go with us,  
We are bound for the promised land.”

And God who is always faithful to his promises will get us there. And all the people said, AMEN.