

January 1, 2012
What You See Is What You Get
A New You For A New Year
Numbers 13:17-14:9
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Happy New Year everybody! We're starting a brand new year today. The last time New Years Day fell on a Sunday was 2005. And it won't happen again for a long time. We're starting a new year together and we're starting a new sermon series as well. We're starting a sermon series titled A NEW YOU FOR A NEW YEAR and today I want us to look at the single most important thing that will influence your life in the coming year. It's the number one thing that will determine whether you are happy or whether you are unhappy in the coming year, whether you succeed or whether you fail, whether you grow or whether you are stagnate. What's that one thing? It's how you look at things, your PERSPECTIVE. Your perspective determines your place in history. How you see things determines your purpose. It determines what you're passionate. I'm talking about how you see God, how you see yourself, how you see life, how you see money; how you see all the important aspects of life. Everything you have in your life, everything you do in your life; everything you want to be in your life is controlled by how you see it, by your perspective.

The Bible tells us there's a direct connection between seeing and believing. Your faith and your perspective are very closely related. The Bible says, "***Faith is the evidence of things not seen.***" (Hebrews 11:1) That means when you have faith you don't see things from a purely physical viewpoint; you see things from a spiritual viewpoint. You've heard people say, "There's more than one way to look at something." That's true. The way you choose to look at things will determine how well you do in all areas of your life. You can either look at things through the eyes of faith or you can look at things through the eyes of fear. That's your choice. If you look at things through the eyes of fear, you'll be filled with anxiety, worry, and nervousness. If you look at things through the eyes of faith, you'll be filled with confidence, trusting God, taking risks you would not normally take because you so often let fear hold you back and paralyze you. It's your choice.

God calls us to see all things through the eyes of faith not fear. He calls us as individuals and corporately as a church to look at things through the eyes of faith not fear. Nowhere is this choice between using the eyes of faith or the eyes of fear more obvious than in the passage we read together from Numbers, chapters 13 and 14. Numbers is the fourth book in the Bible written by Moses. The background is this: Moses has led the children of Israel out of Egypt where they were slaves for four hundred years. They spent two years crossing the desert. It shouldn't have taken them that long but when you're moving a million people at once it takes a while.

They get up to the edge of the Promised Land, the land God has said he wants them to have, and Moses says, "Ah, before we go on in and take hold of this promised land, I'm going to send in some spies to check things out." So he selects twelve men, one from each of the twelve

tribes of Israel. He gives them very specific instructions. They go in, do what he told them to do, and come back to report on what they saw. Ten of the spies say, "Yeah, it's a very beautiful land, flowing with milk and honey, just like God said it would be, but we can't go in there. BUT the people there are too strong and too big and there's too many of them for us to just walk in and take over."

Now God has already done some amazing miracles just to get them to this point but they've apparently already forgotten that fact. Ten of the twelve spies say, "We can't do it." The majority report is being given through the eyes of FEAR. But the minority report, that of Joshua and Caleb, is being given through the eyes of FAITH. Later they are the only two guys in their entire generation who get to go into the Promised Land. No one else gets to go in, not even Moses, because no one else looked at God's promise with the eyes of faith except for Josh and Caleb. For the next 38 years they wandered around the desert until all of the "nay sayers" die off.

I don't want that to happen to you or to Concord Church. I want you to possess your future with faith, with confidence, with boldness. I don't want you to get stuck in the wilderness the rest of your life. Many of you have been wandering around in the wilderness for months, even years. You're going to die in the wilderness unless you set aside your fear and begin to look at the future with eyes of faith. You must have faith in order to possess all that God has planned for you in the future, both as individuals and corporately as a church.

Let's start the story with Numbers 13, verse 17, "***Moses gave the men these instructions as he sent them out to explore the new land: 'Go northward through the Negev into the hill country and see what kind of land this is and find out whether the people living there are strong or weak, few or many. What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? Do their towns have walls or are they unprotected? How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there many trees?'***" Then Moses says, "***Enter the land boldly, and bring back samples of the crops you see.***" (Numbers 13: 17-20) That's the way God wants you to enter this new year, boldly with faith and confidence.

What's Moses doing here? He's sending his leaders on a fact finding mission. He's sending them out to catch a vision of what God has in mind for them. I don't want to dwell on this but if you're a leader let me give you a leadership tip. Before you can lead others to a goal, you have to have a goal; you have to catch a glimpse of what God wants for you. You can't do that if you're afraid.

If you can't envision yourself being healthier, you'll never get healthier. If you can't see yourself being successful, you'll never be successful. If you can't see yourself being used by God for his glory, then you'll never be used by God for his glory. You have to have a vision of something better or you're going to be stuck with something worse than what you could have.

Having a glimpse of what could be is not enough. The twelve spies went into the land they saw how amazing it was. It says, "***When they came to Eshcol they cut down clusters of***

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grapes, so large that it took two of them to carry it back on a pole, and they also took samples of pomegranates and figs." (Numbers 13:23) This was a very fertile land. The crops were spectacular. They saw this with their own eyes and brought samples back for Moses and all the people to see and still they refused to look at the situation with the eyes of faith and instead looked at the situation with the eyes of fear.

There are **seven things** that happen when we look at our future with the eyes of fear instead of the eyes of faith. Let's look at these seven things together.

THE FIRST THING THAT HAPPENS WHEN I LOOK AT MY FUTURE WITH EYES OF FEAR RATHER THAN EYES OF FAITH IS THIS: I GET STRESSES BY CONFLICTING INFORMATION. Throughout your life you are going to hear good news and bad news and what you focus on will determine what you do with your life. You can focus on the negatives or you can focus on the positives. Verse 27 reads, "*This was their report to Moses: 'We arrived in the land that you sent us to see and it is indeed a magnificent country, a land flowing with milk and honey! Here is some of its fruit as proof. But the people living there are powerful, and their cities and towns are fortified and very large. We also saw the descendants of Anak who are living there.'*" (Numbers 13:27) Who are the Anakin? The Anakin were from the tribe of Skywalker and the force was very strong with them. Oh, no. That's the wrong story. I got confused for a minute. The Anakin were actually very large people. They were over six feet tall. Some were as tall as seven feet. They were two hundred, even three hundred pounds. For a small middle easterner these guys looked like giants.

Do you see the conflicting information? It says the land is magnificent... "***But the people living there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large..***" (verse 28) I want you to circle the word "**But**" on your sermon outline. I put it in a little bigger type font than the rest of the verse. See that on your outline? The biggest problem that is going to keep you from experiencing God in the coming year is your big **but!** Everybody has one. "I could do this, but..." "I know God wants me to do this, but..."

Everybody has a "but". Some butts are bigger than others. I can always see your "but", but I can't always see my own. It's our "buts" that keep us from becoming all that God wants us to be. But, but, but, but, but..." I can't do it!

If God is going to lead you into the place he wants you to be in the coming year, you're got to let go of the big "buts" in your life. You're going to have to let go of the big excuses, the big problems, the big reasons why you think "I could never do that - that thing God is calling me to do. We get stressed out by conflicting information. It's a wonderful place but there's some enemies there.

SECOND, WHEN I LOOK AT MY FUTURE WITH EYES OF FEAR RATHER THAN EYES OF FAITH I DEVELOP A SCARCITY MENTALITY. What's a scarcity mentality? It's the idea that there won't be enough. The Israelites who looked through eyes of fear saw that there wasn't enough room for them in the Promised Land. The Israelites who looked through

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eyes of fear saw that there wasn't enough power or strength or might to overcome such great obstacles, in this case it was the people living in the Promised Land. They were really big people. There weren't enough of them to win a battle against the Anakins and all the other people living in the Promised Land.

I once had a man in the church I was serving give \$30,000 to buy a van for me to use for youth group activities. I didn't ask him to do that; he just saw a need and made a donation. Another group in the church called the Buildings and Grounds Committee summonsed me to meet with them and railed me up one side and down the other for asking the man to donate a van so I could drive kids around. I explained how I didn't ask him to do that. They didn't believe me. They were angry at me. They said, "What if we need a new roof for the church. There's only so much money out there and if you're taking it for something as frivolous as a van we won't have it when we really need it." They were seeing things through the eyes of fear and when you do that you have a scarcity mentality. This same man died two years later. When he died he gave about \$50,000 to the church. But he gave \$12,000,000 to the Grove City College because they had a vision of what God wanted them to do and the church didn't. The church was too busy seeing things through the eyes of fear to see the things God wanted them to do. They had no idea Mr. Stevenson had that much money, but God did and God used it to bless a people who had a vision and were working toward that vision with eyes of faith.

There is always plenty of whatever is needed to do what God wants you to do. You can see this is true when you look at things with the eyes of faith.

THIRD, WHEN I LOOK AT MY FUTURE WITH EYES OF FEAR RATHER THAN EYES OF FAITH I FULFILL MY OWN SELF-DEFEATING PROPHECIES. What do I mean by that? I mean that the person who says "I can do it" and the person who says "I can't do it" are both right! If you say "I can" and if you say "I can't" you're right either way, because you'll end up fulfilling what you tell yourself will happen. Right now people who are going to compete for the gold in the Olympics in 2012 are already training. I can guarantee you that not one of them is saying "I can't do this." You never win when you start off thinking you'll lose. Verse 31 says, *"But the men who had gone up with Caleb said, 'We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are.'"* That's the negative prophecy. People who think negatively will fulfill the negative outcome. That's why God couldn't let any of those people enter the Promised Land. He had to wait until they all had died before he could allow Joshua and Caleb to move the people into the Promised Land.

FOURTH, WHEN I LOOK AT MY FUTURE WITH EYES OF FEAR RATHER THAN EYES IF FAITH I INFECT OTHERS WITH MY NEGATIVITY.

I don't just keep my negative view to myself. Please hear this: when you are seeing things through the eyes of fear, you are filled with worry and dread and you don't keep that to yourself. It doesn't just affect you. It affects everyone around you. Verse 32 says, *"They spread a bad report about the land they had explored."* You see, a negative fearful spirit is

contagious. It infects those around you in a negative way. Not only do I infect others when I look at things through the eyes of fear rather than faith, here's the fifth thing that happens...

FIFTH, I SEE MYSELF AS INADEQUATE FOR THE CHALLENGES I FACE. This is a truly sad thing that happens. People who have the ability to really do something with their lives are stymied and stopped by their own negative attitude. Verse 32 says, "*The land we explored devours those living in it!*" Really? Isn't that a bit of an exaggeration? It just eats them right up, devours them. Then it says, "*All the people we saw there are of great size!*" You know what happens when you worry about something? It gets bigger. Have you noticed that? When you worry about something, it gets bigger and bigger and more threatening in your mind. It says in verse 33, "*We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.*" That's what perspective is; how you see things. When you look through eyes of fear you see yourself as inadequate and you even project that perception on others; you see them as seeing you as inadequate.

SIXTH, I MAKE MYSELF MISERABLE. When anyone looks at life through eyes of fear, they make themselves miserable. That's what the Hebrew people did to themselves. It says, "*Then all the people began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. And they grumbled and complained in a great chorus against their leaders....*" (Numbers 14:1-2) When people are afraid they start criticizing their leader, "We shouldn't be doing that. It's too risky!"

SEVENTH, I LONG FOR A PAST THAT NEVER REALLY EXISTED. When anyone looks at life through the eyes of fear, they long for the past, the good old days, when life wasn't so threatening. It says, "*they...grumbled and complained... against... Moses and Aaron. 'We wish we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!'*" (Numbers 14:2) They wanted to go back to Egypt and live out their days. Apparently they forgot how bad it really was back in Egypt. Maybe for a select few it wasn't so bad. But for most of the people, it was oppressive. And now they were so close to moving forward but key people had infected them with a negative spirit and they longed to go back in time. But you can never do that. The past is past and we never remember it accurately.

That's what looking through eyes of fear does to people.

What's the way out? What's the way forward? Verse 30 says, "*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's seeing things through the eyes of faith. Faith is the antidote to fear. Faith is the antidote to stress. Faith is the antidote to a scarcity mentality. Faith is the antidote to self-defeating behavior. Faith is the cure for negativity and it stops the spread of negativity. Faith is the cure for feeling inadequate. Faith stops you from feeling miserable. Faith enables you to look to the future with confidence and courage. Filled with faith, Caleb says we should do it! We should do it right now and not wait any longer! Caleb understood that taking action defeats fear. That's a very important principle in my life. I defeat my fears with

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movement. I don't argue them away. I don't discuss them away. I don't wish them away. I don't talk them away. I defeat my fears with movement.

Jesus said to Mary and Martha after their brother died, "***Didn't I tell you that you will see God's glory if you believe?***" (John 11:40) You'll see it if you believe it. For what you see is what you get.

Here's my question to you. How badly do you want to see God's glory in your life in the coming year? How badly do you want to see God's blessing on your life in the year to come. How badly do you want to see God bless each area of your life.

If you want God's blessing, if you want God to use you, if you want to see the glory of God in your life, you've got to stop nursing your worries, stop feeding your fears by thinking about them on and on. You're going to need to step out in faith and move against your fears. That's what "seeing things through the eyes of faith" is all about. For what you see is what you get.