

Gunston Bible Church
Pastor David Bennett
Key Verses: Numbers 13

“Got **Obstacles**”

Good morning Gunston it is so good to see so many of you here today, we just want to take a moment and say that your presence is greatly appreciated and not taken for granted.

This morning we are continuing with the “**What you Got Series**” last week we dealt with the issue “**Got Excuses**”, so there are no excuses today!

Look to the person beside you and say No Excuses!

Today we are dealing with the Topic “**Got Obstacles.**”

Obstacles are something we will **always** contend with, it all boils down to perspective and focus as to how we let them control us or allow God to work through the situation.

Here is one example of obstacles; let’s see if you can guess who this is?

He was born of illiterate parents at the age of 7, he had to go to work to help support his family.

At age 9, his mother died.

At age 22 he lost his job as a store clerk.

At age 23 he went into debt and became a partner in a small store.

At age 26 his partner died leaving him a huge debt.

By age 35 he had been defeated twice when running for a seat in Congress.

At age 37 he won the election.

At the 39 he lost his re-election bid.

At age 41 his 4 year old son died.

At age 42 he was rejected for a land officer role.

At age 45 he ran for Senate again and lost.

At age 47 he was defeated for the nomination of Vice President.

At age 49 he ran for Senate again and lost again.
At age 51 he was elected President of the United States.

During his second term of office he was assassinated, however his name lives on among the greatest in U.S. History.
His name was (Abraham Lincoln)

This morning we are going to look back into the Old Testament to the book of Numbers, where we find the people of God have been freed from the **bondage of slavery** and led them out of the land of **Egypt** with many signs and wonders.

Just to mention a few he **parted the red sea** and allowed the fleeing Israelites to escape the Pharaoh's army, and then closed the sea on the advancing army. He led them with a pillar of **fire at night** and a **cloud of dust in the day**; he fed them daily with **Manna** from heaven, and brought **water** from rocks to sustain them.

These people not only knew of God they could see and feel his presence among them daily.

And yet with all this proof that their God was present there were **Obstacles** in their way.

One of the tools that Satan has much victory with is the tool of **Obstacles**.

Webster Dictionary defines obstacles as to stand in the way of or to stand in front of, to impede progress.

How many Obstacles have you faced this past week?

Those things that **impeded** your progress with the Lord,
Those things that **steals** our blessings, as we shift our focus on the **Obstacle** rather than the **outcome**, and allowing it to become an **Opportunity**.

We let **obstacles** block our view of God.

Charles Stanley said, “In reality, if God has called us to do something, the only hindrance is **between our temples.**”

God has already planned a way **around or through** the obstacle that is in the way of doing his will.

When we give in to fear and refuse to move forward we miss out on the **great reward** found in God’s will.

The first point we will discuss this morning is...

- 1. Obstacles are allowed to increase our Focus on God’s Promises**

Let us first look back and see what God told Abraham about the promise land.

Gen. 12:1-3, 7- God told this to Abraham

¹ Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; ² And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; ³ And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” ⁷ The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.”

Now we fast forward to present time, and Moses sends in 12 spies into the land to scout it out prior to occupying the land.

Spies are chosen and commissioned.

Numbers 13:1-3, ***¹ “Then the LORD spoke to Moses saying, ² “Send out for yourself men so that they may spy out the land***

of Canaan, which I am going to give to the sons of Israel; you shall send a man from each of their fathers' tribes, everyone a leader among them.”³ So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran at the command of the LORD, all of them men who were heads of the sons of Israel.”

- ✓ Send men to spy out the land of Canaan: These men were on a **reconnaissance** mission; to observe the land of Canaan and bring back a report to the nation.
- ✓ From each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, a leader from among you.

Look at the report the spies gave upon returning;

Numbers 13: 25-29,²⁵ *“When they returned from spying out the land, at the end of forty days,²⁶ they proceeded to come to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; and they brought back word to them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land.²⁷ Thus they told him, and said, “We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.²⁸ Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there.²⁹ Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan.”*

- ✓ *We went to the land where you sent us-* They seemed to sense they were more on a **mission from Israel** than on a **mission from God**; we might already sense the report will be given according to a human perspective, not according to God's perspective.
- ✓ *It truly flows with milk and honey* - what God had **promised** about the land was indeed true.

The first point we will discuss this morning was that **Obstacles** are allowed to increase our Focus on God's Promises

Now the second point is...

2. Human Focus leads to Defeat.

Proverbs 3:5 (ESV), "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding."

Bette Nesmith had a good secretarial job in a Dallas bank when she ran across a problem that interested her. Wasn't there a better way to correct the errors she made on her electric typewriter?

Bette had some art experience and she knew that artists who worked in oils just painted over their errors. Maybe that would work for her too. So she concocted a fluid to paint over her typing errors.

*Before long, all the secretaries in her building were using what she called "Mistake-Out." She attempted to sell the product idea to marketing agencies and various companies, including IBM. They all turned her down. She didn't listen to any of them or believe the **Obstacle** they placed in her way, but kept believing that she would make it.*

*Secretaries continued using her product, so Bette Nesmith's kitchen became her first manufacturing facility that she started on her own. No **Obstacles***

When Bette Nesmith sold the enterprise, the tiny white bottles were earning \$3.5 million annually on sales of over \$ 38 million. The buyer was Gillette Company and the sale price was \$ 47.5 Million dollars.

1 John 2:15-17 (ESV), Do Not Love the World

¹⁵ "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all

*that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God **abides forever.**"*

Another way of looking at it is to ask, what the 2 spies were focusing on...

The first point we will discuss this morning was
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The second point was that Human Focus leads to Defeat.

And now the third point is...

3. God Focus leads to **Victory!**

Liu Chi Kung, who placed second to Van Cliburn in the 1948 Tchaikovsky competition, was imprisoned a year later during the Cultural Revolution in China. During the entire seven years he was held, he was denied the use of the piano. Soon after his release, however, he was back on tour.

Critics wrote in astonishment that his musicianship was better than ever. How did you do this a critic asked, as you had no chance to practice for the last seven years?

I did practice, Liu replied, every day, I rehearsed every piece I have ever played, note by note, in my mind.

- ✓ **Strength of the Enemy.** How many times when called upon to do a task by God and our first thought is on how hard this is or how we will not be able to do it, instead of God.
- ✓ **Condition of the Cities.** "The cities are walled and are great (mighty).
- ✓ **Size of the Enemy-** the opposition's size is always a killer.
- ✓ **Numbers of the Enemy-** the whole country was filled with Israel's enemy

What should they have been focusing on?

The miracles the Lord had already done. 1 Sam. 17:34-37. So much of the times we don't get victory because we lose our steady focus.

They should have been focused on **God's power** and **resources**.

- ✓ Ex. 12:30-31- How the Lord had changed Pharaoh's heart
- ✓ Ex. 12:35-36- How the Lord had materially blessed them
- ✓ Ex. 13:17-21- How the Lord had led them.

In spite of the Obstacle in his way or fear Caleb faithfully objected.

Numbers 13:30 ESV, ***"But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it."***

- ✓ **Caleb - blessed forever!** - commanded the people to immediately (at once) trust and obey God and to take the land, because God had made them able.
- ✓ **Let us go up at once and take possession:** It took great courage for this man to stand against the tide of unbelief, of doubt.
- ✓ **Joshua and Caleb said** to tell them the people in the land are the ones that should be afraid, not us!

The other spies respond to Caleb. **Numbers 13: 31-33**

³¹ ***"But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us."*** ³² ***So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size. ³³ There also we saw the Nephilim and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."***

It is amazing how a group of people can look at the same thing and come away with completely different outlook on what they saw.

They saw the same things on their reconnaissance

- ✓ The same **Grapes**,
- ✓ The same **Men**,
- ✓ The same **Land**,
- ✓ The same **Cities**
- ✓ The same **Opportunities**

One can come away singing in faith, and the other is filled with a sense of certain doom.

Both groups of spies saw the same things but drew different conclusions. As stated they both saw what God said was true about the land, (it was Awesome)

- ✓ **The Ten measured it** by the difficulties against them.
- ✓ **The two measured it** as difficulties against God, they put the Obstacles into proper perspective, (**Conquerable with God**)

Here is the million dollar question will you live by Faith or by Calculation? The Lord knew the Israelites would need another lesson in faith. Sometimes the Lord has to lead us on detours for his glory.

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength. – Corrie Boom

The First point we will discuss this morning was
That Obstacles are allowed to increase our Focus on God's Promises
The Second point was that Human Focus leads to Defeat.
The Third point was God Focus leads to Victory!

The fourth point is....

4. Why are Obstacles so **Effective**?

Romans 16:17, *“I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put **obstacles** in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.”*

Why are obstacles so effective? One reason is **FEAR!**

The Biblical Definition of Fear:

The Bible mentions two specific types of fear. The first type is **beneficial** and is to be **encouraged**. The second type is a **detriment** and is to be overcome.

The first type of fear is fear of the Lord. This type of fear does not necessarily mean to be afraid of something.

However, it is also a proper respect for His wrath and anger. In other words, the fear of the Lord is a total acknowledgement of all that God is, which comes through knowing Him and His attributes.

Isaiah 41:10, *“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”*

Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear. – Ambrose Redmond

- ✓ Your talent is God’s gift to you, what you do with it is your gift back to God. –Leo Buscaglia
- ✓ To succeed you must first improve, to improve you must first practice, to practice you must first learn, and to learn you must first fail.- Wesley Woo
- ✓ The man who follows a crowd will never be followed by a crowd.-R.S. Donnell

The Right Kind of Fear

- ✓ Fear of the Lord is the **beginning of knowledge** (Proverbs 1:7)

- ✓ Fear of the Lord will cause one to **hate evil** (Proverbs 8:13)
- ✓ Fear of the Lord will **prolong life** (Proverbs 10:27)
- ✓ Fear of the Lord leads to **satisfying life** (Proverbs 19:23)

The remarkable thing about fearing God is that when you get God, you fear **nothing else**, whereas if you do not fear God, you should fear everything else.

1 John 4:4 (ESV), “Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

The Wrong Kind of Fear, Top 12 fears (phobias) of people today;

Speaking before a group (40%)
Insects and Bugs (20%)
Deep Water (20%)
Death (20%)
Loneliness (15%)
Driving or even riding in a Car (10%)
Heights (30%)
Financial problems (20%) Disease (20%)
Flying (20%)
Dogs (10%)
Darkness (10%)

Fear = False Education Appearing Real.

Fear makes the wolf bigger than he is;

Fear makes man believe the worst. (Unknown)

Fear is the sand in the machinery of life. (E Stanley Jones)

Here is a poll of teenagers and what they fear;

Failing in School (44%)
Loneliness (33%)
Not Having a Boyfriend/Girlfriend (30%)
Rejection (38%)

Such fears have often led young people to...

- ✓ Lie
- ✓ Cheat
- ✓ Steal
- ✓ Get in the wrong Crowd
- ✓ Give in to peer pressure etc.

Similar fears have caused adults to do the same and more...

Saints we need to understand where there is Faith, fear cannot abide.

Feed your Faith and your Fears will starve to death.

Fear and Faith cannot keep house together, when one enters, the other departs!

Here is a poem by Harry Emerson Fosdick;

Fear Imprisons, Faith Liberates.
Fear Paralyzes, Faith Empowers.
Fear Disheartens, Faith Encourages.
Fear makes Useless, Faith makes Serviceable.

Most of All...

Fear puts Hopelessness at the Heart of Life, while Faith Rejoices in its God!

The First point we will discussed this morning was...

That Obstacles are allowed to increase our Focus on God's Promises

The Second point was that Human Focus leads to Defeat.

The Third point was God Focus leads to Victory!

The fourth point was why are Obstacles so Effective?

And the final point is...

5. Results of **Disobedience**

Ephesians 5:6, *“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”*

The Lord allowed his chosen people to wander the desert for 40 years, instead of taking them into the promise land. As a result of their disobedience and lack of faith no one above the age of 20 was allowed in the Promise Land, except the two spies that had a positive report, (Joshua and Caleb)

Joshua 5:6, *“For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, that is, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished because they did not listen to the voice of the LORD, to whom the LORD had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the LORD had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey.”*

As Christians we need to lean on the word of God and not allow **Obstacles** to keep us from **OUR Promise Land**, or **Banquets Table** that has been set for us, or any blessings that we would **miss out on** because we do not step out in faith, we should lean on the verses below to strengthen us...

Philippians 4:13, *“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”*

Romans 8:37, *“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.”*

Saints remember that what the world sees as **Obstacles**, Christians should see as **Opportunities**.

What are your obstacles, what is keeping you from going to the promise land **TODAY?**