



I'm Not Listening: Going Against the Majority

Devotion

"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.' Then the men who had gone up with him said, 'We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are.' So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, 'The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height.'" Numbers 13:30-32

Someone once said, "If you follow the crowd, you might get lost in it." Anyone who's ever been in a massive herd of people can attest to the accuracy of that quote. There have been times when attending a big sporting event or touring a famous building where I was shuffled along with hundreds of other people. All you can do is go with the flow when you're in a sea of people. Trying to wiggle your way out or turn around and go "upstream" is nearly impossible.

Being stuck in a crowd is one way to get lost. Another way is in the proverbial sense. Everyone faces peer pressure. It often happens when the "crowd" wants to do a particular thing, but you do not. Whether it's drinking, sex, drugs, skipping class, or mocking someone else, the temptation to "go along with the crowd" and "do what everyone else is doing" is strong. That's the situation Caleb and Joshua found themselves in after they returned with eight other men who were sent to spy out the land of Canaan. The spies deliver their report and mention how good the land is. There's just one problem: The people there are massive and strong. Eight of the spies convince the people that they cannot take the land. This went directly against God's word that said He would deliver the land into their hands.

Caleb is ready to go take the land right away and tries to rally the people. Joshua, in the next chapter, reminds the Israelites that God is with them and to not rebel against Him or be afraid of the Canaanites (Numbers 14:6-9). The Israelites become completely unraveled by this despite the confident reminder of God's promise, protection, and power. They want to elect a new leader and return to Egypt. They wanted Caleb and Joshua stoned to death. They became lost in the crowd that pressured them into losing hope and faith in the God who alone could provide the victory He had already promised them.

There's another quote that's very fitting for this story. Roy E. Disney (Walt Disney's nephew) once said, "It's not hard to make decisions once you know what your values are." For Caleb and Joshua, we see they clearly value the promises and words of God. They are obedient to them and follow them, even to the point of going against the popular opinion which threatens to kill them for not following along. What did the Israelites value? Doing things their own way in their own strength regardless of what God had to say. Caleb and Joshua decided to stand with God; the Israelites decided to listen to themselves and not God.

Going against the majority is never easy or fun. The pressure we fear can cripple us into sinning. When you feel pressured to do something you know you shouldn't do, remember the words God spoke to Joshua when he took over for Moses: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

God's plan for salvation ENDURED because of faithful servants like Caleb and Joshua who refused to let peer pressure negatively affect them. The plan for salvation was perfected in Jesus who was most obedient to God, even when it involved His humiliation and death on a cross. Jesus gives us comforting words in John 14:27 to remember when we feel alone and as though we're getting lost in the crowd: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." When we believe in Jesus, we are never alone in life, even when we feel pressured to conform. Look to the positive role models in Scripture and in your life who will help you ENDURE until the end.

Journal Questions

1. Do you ever consider your values or what matters most to you when making decisions? Why or why not? How can remembering our baptismal identity help us make tough decisions?
2. What comfort do you find in Scripture when you fail to resist peer pressure? What strength can you draw from being part of a Christian community?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, You know the struggle we face when outside pressure comes upon us. Your Holy Son knew this pressure and overcame it for our sake. Help us to draw near to Him and to clearly hear His promise to be with us until the end of the age. When we do succumb to peer pressure and sin against You, forgive us and restore us for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. In His most holy name we pray. Amen.