

Preparation For The Journey

Perception's Influence

Now that we have talked about focus, we need to ask the question, *what causes us to focus on the things we naturally focus on?* After all, while we can direct our focus with intervention, we must acknowledge that we naturally focus on things without even thinking about it. Why is that? What is it that determines our focus? The answer is **perception**.

We will find in scripture where an improper perception will lead to an improper focus, which leads to actions that affected an entire generation of people, causing them to miss out on the promises of God. When the opposite is true, a nation was delivered from tyranny. In this study, we will be looking at the books of Numbers and 1 Samuel. Here we are going to find the most explicit examples of what can happen when we either discard our **references** (this term is discussed below) of the greatness of God, or remember them like a monument placed before our eyes. We will find that, without those references, our perception can be distorted from God's reality and we are lead away to actions motivated by a focus that is in direct opposition to the will of God. Likewise, we will see the glorious results that emerge from holding tight to our references, which allow us to obtain a perception that is akin to God's, and thus, provides us with a focus that will lead us to victory. As a quick illustration of the complete process I'm speaking of, I would like to share the following example:

Let's imagine for a moment that you are walking down a sidewalk, and you suddenly see a pit bull coming toward you. If you were like me, your response would be to move to the other side of the street in order to put as much distance between you and the dog as possible. Why would I take action to be on the other side of the street? Because my focus is on not getting bit by the dog. Why is this my focus? Because my perception of pit bulls is that they are mean and unpredictable. Why do I have such a negative perception of pit bulls? Because my **references** of these animals have always depicted them as dangerous and unpredictable. Where did I get my references? From newspaper accounts, television reports, and word of mouth testimonials. Using this same process, let's change the scenario and say that it was a fluffy kitten coming toward you instead. Can you determine your actions, and then discover the *why* of your focus, perception, and references? The mastery of this process will be invaluable to you as you pursue

your spiritual development and your efforts to conform to the image of Christ in both thought and deed.

We are going to look at two specific examples of perception, and the results that came from them. First, we will look at the story of the twelve spies and the reports they gave concerning Israel's invasion of Canaan. Second, we are going to look at the story of David and his conflict with Goliath. Both cases involved high stakes. Both cases concerned the matter of life and death. Both cases involved the victory or defeat of a nation. And finally, in both cases, it was the thoughts and actions of people who knew and experienced God's greatness and power that were victorious. Let us pay close attention in order to learn the lesson being taught in scripture, for as believers in Christ, we also know of God's greatness and power and we are without excuse.

Perceptions Influence

Why We Act and Think the Way We Do

Our Actions are determined by our Focus

Our Focus is determined by our Perception

Our Perception is determined by our References

Our References are determined by our Knowledge

And now, let's look at some examples of how perception can influence outcomes...

Caleb & Joshua vs. The Ten Spies

Numbers 13:25-33 / 14:1-11

THE SPIES:

1. **References** were drawn from The Size & Strength Of The Enemy

“Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there.”

Numbers 13:28

“...The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the men are of great stature.”

Numbers 13:32

2. **Perception** was a view of Hopelessness Due To Their Inadequacies

“There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”

Numbers 13:33

3. **Focus** was fixed on Death – Defeat – Despair

... “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in the wilderness! Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?”

Numbers 14:2-3

4. **Actions** revealed their Rejection & Disbelief Of God

“Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.”

Numbers 14:4

And the Lord said to Moses: “How long will these people reject me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them?”

Numbers 14:11

CALEB & JOSHUA:

1. **References** were drawn from God’s Promise To Give Them The Land

“The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, He will bring us into this land and give it to us a land which flows with milk and honey.”

Numbers 14:7-8

2. **Perception** was a view of A Vulnerable, Defeated & Consumed Enemy

“Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them ...”

Numbers 14:9

3. **Focus** was fixed on God’s Presence, Protection, & Promise

“...He will bring us into the land and give it to us...the Lord is with us. Do not fear them.

Numbers 14:8a, 9d

4. **Actions** revealed their Trust In God & His Faithfulness

“Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.”

Numbers 13:30

DAVID vs. GOLIATH

1 Samuel 17:1-51

1. **References** were drawn from Past Experiences Of God’s Deliverance

But David said to Saul “Your servant used to keep his father’s sheep, and when a lion or a bear and took a lamb out of the flock, I went after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it rose up against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it.”

1Samuel 17:34-35

2. **Perception** was a view of Certain Defeat Of Those Opposing God

“Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defiled the armies of the living God.

1Samuel 17:36

3. **Focus** was fixed on God's Power Of Deliverance

Moreover David said "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

1Samuel 17:37

"You come against me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defiled. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beast of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly will know that the Lord does not save with the sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands."

1Samuel 17:45-47

4. **Actions** revealed his Trust In God's Covenant

And it was so, when the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, that David hastened and ran toward the army to meet the Philistine. Then David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone; and he slung it and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the earth. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. But there was no sword in the hand of David. Therefore David ran and stood over the Philistine, took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled.

1Samuel 17:48-51

Identify the Giants in Your Life

Do you have giants in your life? If you do what kind are they? Are they the kind, that just by their presence they keep you from entering into a place of blessing, a place of promise? Or, are they the kind that rise up against you and defy your faith in God, keeping you from being the person God has called you to be? Once you have identified them, how are you going to respond to them, what kind of action are you going to take? Will you be like the children of Israel who ignored their references of God's greatness and wanted to run away from

God's promise, or at best just hold their ground, unable to advance because of fear? Or will you be like Caleb, Joshua and David, men who believed in the presence, power and promises of their God?

As we begin to grow in our walk with God and in spiritual maturity, we are going to face many giants. Let the stories we've just read about be a monument raised high in your memory, encouraging you to trust God for the victory He has promised. In Him we are more than conquerors in Christ. If we will but stand up in the face of our giants, and in the power of God's Spirit, declare to the giants that are holding us back, "PREPARE TO DIE", we will be hurling a stone like the one David cast at Goliath, except ours will not be of stone, but of the Word of God. And it will sink deep into the head of your giant, and the giant will fall to the ground, and you will remove its head from its shoulders. And you will stand before heaven and earth victorious.