

20251228 A Different Spirit – Duane

Numbers 14:24

What a beautiful time of year this is—the weekend nestled between the joy of Christmas and the fresh promise of a New Year. We've just celebrated the birth of our Saviour, the Light of the World breaking into our darkness, and now we stand on the threshold of 2026, reflecting on the year gone by and looking ahead with hope.

It can be a season of introspection. A time when we pause and ask ourselves: How have we allowed the Holy Spirit to guide us in 2025? How will we let Him guide us the days ahead?

Today, I want to draw our attention to a powerful story from Scripture that speaks directly to this moment of transition. It's found in the book of Numbers 14:24: ***"But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has wholly followed Me, I will bring him into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it."***

These words from God Himself highlight a man named Caleb, who stood out in a crowd of doubters because he possessed a **"different spirit."** In a world, and yes, even in the church, where conformity often reigns, Caleb's story challenges us to embrace a spirit that doesn't blend in but stands firm in faith.

Let me set the scene. It's been a full year since God delivered the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. Picture it: two million souls encamped at Kadesh Barnea, the southern border of the Promised Land. What a journey it had been! They had witnessed miracle after miracle. The Red Sea parting, allowing them to walk on dry ground while their enemies drowned. Water gushing from a rock in the desert heat. Manna falling like heavenly bread each morning, quail in abundance for their evening meals. A pillar of cloud guiding them by day, a pillar of fire illuminating the night. Oh, don't forget God descending on Mount Sinai, where Moses received the Ten Commandments. These weren't distant tales; they were fresh memories.

Now, here they were, on the cusp of fulfillment. The Promised Land was within reach! Moses, wise leader that he was, selected twelve men, one from each tribe, to spy out the land. Their mission: assess the people, their strength, their numbers, and the land's fertility. Was it rich or barren? Fruitful or forsaken?

After forty days, the spies returned, clusters of grapes so massive they required poles to carry them. All twelve agreed: ***"The land flows with milk and honey!"*** But then, the tide turned. Ten of them fixated on the obstacles—the fortified cities, the inhabitants towering like giants, descendants of Anak who made the spies feel like mere grasshoppers. Their report spread fear like wildfire: ***"We can't do this! It's impossible!"***

The people, swayed by this negativity, wept through the night, plotting to stone their leaders, choose a new one, and retreat to Egypt—the very place of their bondage.

Only two voices rose in dissent: Caleb and Joshua. ***"If the Lord delights in us,"*** they declared, ***"He will bring us into this land and give it to us. We should go up and take possession, for we can certainly do it!"*** (Numbers 13:30). But the Israelites' anger nearly cost them their lives.

That's when God's judgment fell: ***"Not one of the men who saw My glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed Me and tested Me ten times—not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated Me with contempt will ever see it"*** (Numbers 14:22-23).

Out of millions, only Caleb and Joshua would enter the Promised Land. Why? What set them apart? **The key lies in those words: "a different spirit."** Caleb didn't conform to the fear-mongering norms. He stood out, even when it risked everything. And as we hover between Christmas celebrations and New Year's resolutions, I believe Caleb's life offers us a blueprint for cultivating that same different spirit in 2026.

In examining Caleb's story, I see three hallmarks of his different spirit: **a Different Passion, a Different Perspective, and a Different Position.** Let's unpack these together, praying that the Holy Spirit ignites them in our hearts.

First, Caleb had a Different Passion.

Scripture repeats ***"He wholly followed the Lord"*** several times. In Numbers 32:11-12, God declares that none from twenty years old and up would see the land because ***"they have not wholly followed Me, except Caleb and Joshua, for they have wholly followed the Lord."*** Deuteronomy 1:36, ***"Except Caleb... to him and his children I am giving the land on which he walked, because he wholly followed the Lord."***

Joshua 14:8-9 records Caleb's own words: ***"My brethren made the heart of the people melt, but I wholly followed the Lord my God. So Moses swore... 'the land where your foot has trodden shall be your inheritance... because you have wholly followed the Lord my God.'"*** And in Joshua 14:14, Hebron becomes Caleb's inheritance ***"because he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel."***

What does **"wholly followed"** mean? It means Caleb pursued God with every fiber of his being—no reservations, no half-measures. He loved the Lord with all his heart, soul, and mind, embodying what Jesus called the greatest commandment in Matthew 22:36-38. In this season between Christmas and New Year, when we reflect on gifts given and received, let's ask: Have we given God our all in 2025? Or have our hearts

been divided? Sadly, sometimes we serve with split loyalties, trying to juggle God and the world. James 4:8 warns, **"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."** A divided heart chases two masters, as Jesus said in Matthew 6:24. We see a tragic example in King Solomon. Blessed with unmatched wisdom, visited by queens and kings, son of David—a man after God's own heart—Solomon started strong. But 1 Kings 11:4 reveals, **"When Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David."**

How did this happen? Solomon neglected Proverbs 4:23: **"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life."** He ignored Jesus' words in Matthew 6:33: **"Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."** Instead, he chased wealth, power, and pleasures, dividing his heart until it turned away. Caleb, in contrast, guarded his heart diligently. At forty, he spied the land and gave a faithful report, but he didn't inherit it until eighty-five—forty-five years of wandering with a grumbling, rebellious people. He could have grown bitter, joined the murmurs, or despaired. But no, his passion remained fixed on God. He wholly followed, seeking the Kingdom above all. As we step into 2026, let's resolve to have a different passion. In a world chasing fleeting trends, social media likes, and material success, let our fire burn for God alone. Serve Him with every ounce, hold nothing back. This passion marked Caleb's different spirit—may it mark ours too.

Moving to our second point: **Caleb had a Different Perspective.**

Perspective shapes everything, especially in times of transition like this weekend. Let's contrast the ten spies' view with Caleb's. In Numbers 13:27-29, they reported: **"We went to the land... It truly flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. 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."** It started positive, but **"nevertheless"** shifted focus to negatives—the giants, the walls. They lost sight of God, and fear flooded in.

Remember Peter walking on water? Eyes on Jesus, he defied physics. But glancing at the waves and wind, he sank (Matthew 14:28-31). The spies did the same: eyes off God, onto obstacles, and hope drowned. I'm reminded of Martin Luther, the reformer, who once sank into depression. His wife, dressed in mourning black, asked if he'd heard God had died. Outraged, Luther accused her of blasphemy. "If God isn't dead," she replied, "why act as if He is?" The spies acted as if God were absent, losing hope.

Now, Caleb's perspective: ***"If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land flowing with milk and honey"*** (Numbers 14:8). He didn't deny the giants or walls, he saw them too. But his focus was on God and not problems, but the Problem-Solver.

We see this in 1 Samuel 17, where Goliath terrified Israel's army. Their perspective: ***"He's too big!"*** But young David declared, ***"I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts... This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand"*** (verses 45-47). Sling in hand, stone flying, giant falling—because David's eyes were on God.

In 2025, we've faced giants: personal sickness, family strife, national unrest, economic pressures, spiritual doubts. As we enter 2026, giants loom—uncertainty, unbelief. If we fixate on them, we'll falter. But with a different perspective, focused on Christ, the babe of Christmas who conquered death, we'll see them fall. Faith stirs when perspective shifts heavenward.

Finally, our third point: Caleb had a Different Position.

A stirred faith repositions us—from defeat to victory, impossibility to triumph. Faith eyes God's power, not ours.

The ten spies compared themselves to giants: ***"We're grasshoppers!"*** (Numbers 13:33). But Caleb silenced them: ***"We should go up and take possession, for we can certainly do it"*** (13:30). He measured giants against God.

The next day, with Joshua, he urged: ***"The land is exceedingly good... If the Lord delights in us, He will bring us... Do not rebel... nor fear... for they are our bread; their protection has departed, and the Lord is with us"*** (14:6-9). Notice, no mention of their strength, but repeated emphasis on the Lord. Caleb saw the same threats, but positioned himself in faith—God-centric, not self-centric.

In closing, as Christmas season fades and New Year approaches, let's emulate Caleb. Cultivate a different passion: wholly follow God, guarding hearts diligently. Adopt a different perspective: fix eyes on Jesus, watching giants crumble. Embrace a different position: stand in faith, believing the impossible through God's might.