

Sunday 7 April 2024

Life Group Leaders' Notes

Series: Now Is The Time

Title: Now Is The Time To Accelerate

Key Text: Deuteronomy 1:2

You can move quickly into a new place of fruitfulness and fulfilment of dreams. When we line up with God, what has not happened for years and even decades, can become a reality within a few weeks and months.

Deuteronomy 1:2 says: *'It takes eleven days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea by the Mount Seir road.'* Whilst this text may seem obscure, it is a message that can cause you to break free of past limitations and see rapid growth in your life, family and in the church.

Although there has been much debate about the exact location of Horeb, most Christian scholars believe it to be in the southern part of the Sinai Peninsula. Travelling along the main desert road, the Israelites after their escape from Egypt, were headed to Kadesh Barnea which was at the border of the Promised Land. It was a journey that should have taken 11 days. But in fact, it was 40 years before the Israelites as a nation entered Canaan. That's quite a delay. And it was caused because of sin, criticism, rebelliousness and unbelief. In fact, a whole generation who were used to this kind of culture died off in a desert of unfilled destiny.

But then the moment came when everything switched gear. The compromised culture of the people of God changed and the Israelites soon moved into the Promised Land to receive what God had long promised (Deuteronomy 1:5-8).

These words are very relevant today to us as individual Christians and to many churches, especially in countries like the UK where Christianity seems to have become stuck in a dry and desert place in recent decades. This is what we need to do:

- ***Recognise we have stayed too long where we are*** ('we have stayed long enough at this mountain')

- ***Break camp and move out from the usual and familiar***

- Advance: go forwards and conquer new challenges

- Take possession of the Promises that God has given you

In other words: now is the time to accelerate, to get going with new urgency, to pick up the pace of your walk with God, to align yourself with the Holy Spirit when He wants to do in a short time what has previously taken a long time (Isaiah 60:22; 2 Corinthians 6:1-2). Urgency is one of the key themes of the gospel. As Christians we should not procrastinate in living for God and in sharing our faith (John 4:35; Amos 9:13).

We too need to speed up to keep up with God's plans for a great global harvest but also one in the UK, London and Windsor, and in Robertson, South Africa. Even in the secular world, there is an awareness of how we need to step up the pace of how we are living (See 'The 12 Week Year' book).

The authors write of how we should stop thinking in terms of 12 months but rather focus on what we can achieve in 12 weeks. See each quarter like a year and four quarters like four years. Imagine then that each week is a month so plan to achieve in each week what would normally take a month. This will stop you putting things off to a later time and make you evaluate how you can maximise each day.

That's what we plan to do as a church. We are going to focus on how we can grow as a church and gather in a greater harvest over the next 12 weeks. We have 12 Sundays including this one before the UK G12 conference in London and we are going to focus on gathering in the harvest over each Sunday and each week. We are going to be specific about what we are aiming to achieve: 700 people in Windsor and Maidenhead and 250 in London and 250 in Robertson. We are going to pray for this and mobilise each generation of the church for this. This is your time, your family's time and our time to accelerate:

1. Consecration

2. Visualisation of God's plans (Deuteronomy 1:8)
3. Activation of your faith
4. Communication
5. Cooperation with your senior partner
6. Multiplication of leaders
7. Implementation (Philippians 3:13-14)

Apply

1. Consecration. This means giving yourself fully to the Lord and turning from what is displeasing to the Lord. It begins in your heart and in the culture you develop in your home. You must radically break with any of the sins that caused a whole generation to die in the desert. No critical attitudes and gossip. No rebelliousness against people in authority. No disobedience to God's words. You must have pure heart if you want to see God. You must be wholeheartedly committed to the Lord. When you change, everything changes. Acceleration starts with you. Be the example of someone who is clearly available to move to new levels with God.

2. Visualisation of God's plans (Deuteronomy 1:8). The Lord wanted them to see what Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had seen: that God had given them a whole land. It was theirs for the taking. So too we must visualise multitudes like sheep without a shepherd just as Jesus saw. We need not to focus as many do on spiritual and church decline, but on new possibilities of growth. See the harvest is ready, people are waiting. Visualise that you can help and minister to tens, fifties, hundreds, thousands, young, older, singles, families, whole ethnic groups. This is no time for small dreams. Receive your dreams from God. Write them down. Work towards their fulfilment every day.

3. Activation of your faith. It was only in the second year that they were near the borders of Canaan, and they could have gone straight in. But they were not ready to take hold of the opportunity that God was offering them. Just two out of 12 leaders, Joshua and Caleb, had the faith to say that we can certainly conquer every giant that we face. And so they waited

another 38 years. We too need to have a sure faith in a God who can still work miracles of many kinds when we step out to do His work.

4. Communication. Just as Moses declared the word to break camp and conquer, so too we must speak words of direction and faith to our families and our groups of disciples. And we should create a lifestyle of telling people about our faith and the good news of Jesus to our friends and to all we meet. Also, we should take every opportunity to invite and inspire people through all means of communication, including social media.

5. Cooperation with your senior partner. Listen to and be led by the Holy Spirit. Ask for discernment and direction. Stay close to the Lord so that you can be blown along by the wind of the same Holy Spirit that blew the first disciples out of the upper room into cities and nations.

6. Multiplication of leaders. In every group we want to see the potential of every Christian and work to build teams of confident disciples into effective teams of leaders. And that starts with constantly inviting people to life classes and welcoming them in life groups.

7. Implementation. Do what you plan to do (Philippians 3:13-14). Henry Ford said: *'you can't build a reputation on what you're going to do.'* Aristotle said: *'we are what we repeatedly do. Excellence... is not an act but a habit.'* This is no day for staying in the desert nor for fearing giants. Yes, there are many challenges in our nation but there are also many opportunities. We must not delay or doubt. This is not a day to look back and stay put. But rather to look up to God and get out into the land with new energy and great speed to bring in the harvest. Now is the time to accelerate.