

Giants, Grasshoppers, and the Stories We Tell Ourselves.

I Doubt it

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well good morning church how's everybody feeling this morning good morning to our olmsted falls campus and good morning to the fellas and friends of the church at lorraine correctional and really it truly is a great morning today because across our middleberg heights campus and our olmsted falls campus as you've heard earlier we have 120 plus students serving this morning can we make some noise for our youth i'm Joe i'm one of the youth pastors here and i'm super excited uh to be with you this morning i graduated weird it's weird to say this i graduated high school at 15 years ago this month, and obviously shortly before I graduated high school, I turned 18, and I'll never forget my 18th birthday. I woke up. I still sleep in my eyes. I was feeling pretty groggy, pretty tired, and my parents kind of waited for me to come to, and then they said, hey, your gift is outside, and most of you already know what that means and what's coming, but I was too tired to even think straight, and so I either remember like walking around the corner of our house or like that garage door slowly lifting and turn the corner, and there's a car there that I never recognized. I didn't recognize. I'd never seen before, and I'm thinking to myself, and actually you could throw that picture of that car, that beautiful luxurious car right there. I'm thinking to myself, man, do I have like family? Do I have family in town that I'm not familiar with like this vehicle? Remember, I'm still waking up, and my mom and dad, they hand me the keys, and they say, surprise, that's your birthday present, and now what I'm about to say, you might judge me for it, but I was not thrilled to get, my mom and dad are tuning in this morning, and so forgive me, mom and dad. They don't know this. I was not, I was not thrilled with that birthday present, but here's why. If you think it's a material possession issue, you don't know me at all. You should see the car that's in the parking lot right now that I drove here. It looks a lot worse right now than that one does, and so, and it wasn't because I wasn't thrilled, because I just knew that I would be pushing the ladies away from me, okay? That wasn't the thing either. If you want to know why I wasn't thrilled to receive this car, you got to stay locked into the message. Revisit that in a little bit, but I want to conclude today, this morning, our series that we've been in since Easter called, I Doubt It. Look at your neighbor, say, I doubt it, and I want to preach a

message to you called, Giant Grasshoppers in the Stories We Tell Ourselves. We're going to be picking up in Numbers 13. We're diving straight into it this morning. It says this, the Lord said to Moses, send some men to explore the land, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe, send one of its leaders. So at the Lord's command, Moses sent them out from the desert of Paran. All of them were leaders of the Israelites. Now, in order for you to understand this, so Moses sends out 12 men in the equivalent, like the nature of the 12 tribes of Israel, but if you're really going to understand this passage, you have to first understand what happened in Genesis 15. In Genesis 15, God reaffirms his covenant with a guy named Abram, and he promises Abram, later his name's turned to Abraham, he promises him that one day his descendants will inherit a land, and they're going to push out a bunch of people to inherit that land, and God's going to establish his line through his descendants. And now in Numbers 13, so the rest of the story from Genesis up to this point, is telling the story of how God is doing that. And now that people group, they are on the threshold of God's long-awaited promise some 400 to 430 years before. So this is kind of a big deal. And we're going to skip some verses to save sometime. It's just the names of all of those people. And Numbers 13, 16, it'll be up on the screen behind me. These are the names of the men Moses sent to explore the land. Moses gave Hosea, son of Nun, the name Joshua. When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said, Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country. See what the land is like, and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwalled or fortified? How is the soil? Moses is playing 21 questions here. Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees in it or not? And do your best to find out. To bring back some of the fruit of the land. It was the season for the first ripe grapes. So Moses lays out a ton of instructions. He's excited about it. You can tell. He's ready. So they went up inverse 21 and explored the land from the desert of Zin, as far as Rehob, toward Lebo Hamath. They went up through the Negev and came back to Hebron, where Ahimon, Shassai, I never know if I'm saying any of these right, by the way, and Talmi, the descendants of Anak, lived. Hebron had built seven years before Zon in Egypt. When they reached the valley of Eshkol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs. That place was called the Valley of Eshkol because of the cluster of grapes the Israelites had cut off there. At the end of 40 days, really significant biblical number, they returned from exploring

the land. Thanks for bearing with me through all those tough names to pronounce. And so, we really don't get a ton of details. Moses tells them, hey, find out all this stuff for me. And we find out three things through verses 21 through 25. We find out, first off, that the descendants of Anak live there. And hold your horses in a little bit. We're going to dig up some gold from that. Then some people, there's a picture coming up beside me on the screen. Some people want you to make note of, when they look at this passage, that they did get some fruit. And the fruit, took two people to carry it. And so, some make mention of, hey, if it takes two people to carry some grapes, some figs, some pomegranates, imagine the size of the fruit. And then, because of that, some say, well, imagine the size of the people who lived there. Right? And so, but once again, we'll get to that in a moment. And we'll find some good stuff in there. And then, the last thing we find out is that 12 spies were sent. It took 40 people to carry the fruit. And so, some people, 40 days, and all 12 spies returned. So, you would think, if your job is to be a spy, that you did a good job. You understood the assignment. Bada-bing, bada-boom. It's over. And then, this is what we find out in verse 26. We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey. Here is its fruit. But, the people who live there are powerful. And the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites live in the Negev. The Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the hill country. And the Canaanites live near the sea along the way. The Jordan. So, they go. They understand the assignment. They get it done. They get the fruit. They see the land. It flows with milk and honey. But, we've got an issue. We would look at that and say, well, what's the big deal? But, for this people, 10 of the 12 spies, this people group, it's not just a big deal. It's a giant deal. First off, though, you have to understand something. Back in Genesis 15, I referenced that passage earlier. I'm going to throw up 19 through 21 on the screen beside me. Remember that God already saw this coming. 400 to 430 years in advance, He had said to Abram, your descendants are going to go to a land that has all of these ites on it. The Kenites, Kenizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephites, Amorites. Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites. That's a whole lot of ites. Everything in there besides termites, right? There's a lot of things going on. And so, God says, hey, this is what awaits your descendants. God sees it coming. So, what's the giant deal happening here? I'd be remiss if I didn't detour into this for a moment and just kind of paint the picture for you. Back in Genesis 6, 1 through 4, the Bible says this. A very controversial passage right here. When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born

to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful and they married any of them they chose. Then the Lord said, my spirit will not contend with humans forever for they are mortal. Their days will be 120 years. The Nephilim were on the earth in those days and also afterwards when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were heroes of old, men of renown. And so, what is happening in this passage is super widely debated, okay? And it all is contingent upon this phrase, sons of God. Benai Elohim, sons of God. Now, there's two scholarly takes. There's two main takes on this passage. The first one is that they are fallen angels who had children with human women in their old age and then they introduced giant babies called the Nephilim. And for our like Western mindset, you know, we think like, nah, no way. That's pretty crazy. That's far-fetched. But this is actually the most historically, I guess it depends on who you asked, but this is actually the most like historically rooted take on this passage. The second popular take is that they're the descendants of Seth. And I didn't come in here this morning to have a theological debate for you. This is not primary to your theological views. This is, a very tertiary, secondary issue, but these are the takes here, and so I'm following this thread as if the first path was true, because it's the one that, at this point in my journey, I think I align with the most, and so the Nephilim are these fallen angel baby things, giants, sounds crazy, right, but that's the picture that you, that 50% chance that you should be developing in your mind of them. Deuteronomy 2, 10 through 11, we're going to bounce around. It's going to be quick. Just stay with me. It says, the Emites used to live there, a people strong and numerous and as tall as the Anakites. Like the Anakites, they too were considered Rephites, but the Moabites called them Emites, all right, and so if you, yeah, I know there's a lot. There's a lot of ites, I told you, but stay with me, because Numbers 13, who's living in the land? The descendants of Anak, and right here, you find in Deuteronomy, this happens before Numbers, you find that the descendants of Anak are considered Rephites, and when were Rephites mentioned? In Genesis 15, and what does Rephites literally translate into? The terrible ones. There's some pictures coming upon the screen beside me. When you Google things like Rephites, you'll see that there's a lot of them. There's a lot of them. There's a lot of them. There's a lot of Rephites, Anakites, and Emites. Can you tell? I have a lot of time on my hands. So, one take could be wrong, but this is kind of some of the pictures that over the years that people have developed of what's being painted by the biblical narrative, and so I have a question for you this morning. Are you facing a giant problem? Have you

experienced a terrible piece of news? Are you facing a giant debt, a giant regret, or something of that nature? See, the giants we face now, they look different than the ones that they face, but I don't know about you guys, but I feel like, especially lately in my life, I've been facing some giants. Numbers 13,30. So, 10 of the 12 spies, they're from the kingdom of God. They're from the kingdom of God. They're freaked out. They say, we can't do this. There's no way we can conquer this land. But then Caleb speaks up, and it says, then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, we should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it. But the men who had gone up with him said, we can't attack those people. They're stronger than we are, and they spread among the people, the Israelites, a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, the land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we see there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there, the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim. We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we seemed the same to them. And so now you see the fullness of the text. It comes full circle. Why I read you through all those random passages, it seemed like. The Anakites are connected to those Nephilim. We have confirmation here back in Genesis 6, and 10 out of the 12 spies see that Israel has a giant problem to face, and they want nothing to do with it. You ever been there? You ever got that terrible piece of news, and some of you, you want to attack it right away and go into problem-solving mode, and others of you, you just want to go to bed. You don't want to face it. You don't want to face the giant problem. And 10 out of these 12 spies, that's where they're at. They don't they don't want to deal with this. It's easier where they're at than to deal with the giants that they might have to face. But here's the truth. The truth is two-fold. The first is that God's people have always been called to conquer giants and to confront them. That was always part of the plan. How do we know this? Because if the people cannot God saw your giant problem coming long ago. Remember Abram? He gets the problem 400 to 430 years in advance and says, your people, they're going to conquer some giants. They're going to go to the land of the Rephites. They're going to try to, they're going to have to, they're going to have to do this thing. God saw the problem long ago and we're called to step into it and confront those giants. In fact, in Genesis 1, 26 through 28, you see that human beings are commanded to rule. We are commanded to reproduce, which let's be honest, that's pretty dope how God made that whole thing happen. And humans are commanded to subdue. Now that word subdue is an interesting word because in Hebrew, it's kavesh, and I didn't study Hebrew, so this is like

my best stab at pronunciation. And in noun form, it's a footstool. So in verb form, it's kavosh, and it's to make something into your footstool or defeat your enemies. If you've ever heard the phrase, put the kabosh on it, it's very similar to that. Bring it into submission, rule it, make that thing submit. That's part of the Genesis 1, 26 through 28. This mandate that we as human beings have been called to rule. So why are they so afraid of the giants? Well, if you've made it this long, we'll talk about that beautiful car again that I showed you at the beginning. See, the reason when my parents handed me the key to that 2001 Buick LeSabre, that I was so not really thrilled about it, was that it wasn't because of how it looked. Like I said, it wasn't because I was thinking I was going to have to just, you know, push the girls away from me because I was in this beautiful car. The reason I was not thrilled about it was because I took all of my driver's training at 16 years old. I took all of my testing, all of the things, two years prior to that moment. And because of AAU sports, honestly, probably just because a little bit of teenage laziness and because I had a couple best friends that lived close to me. They picked me up and drive me everywhere because gas wasn't incredibly expensive at that time. I just kind of shelved the process of getting my license. I know that that is a shocker to some teenagers in the room. They're just like itching to get their license already. For me, I shelved the process. And when I saw that car, now that I was 18, I knew that it was time to pass that test that I did not feel equipped for. And I found out recently that this generation, they don't even have to take maneuverability. That was messed up. That was messed up, man. And that was the whole part that I was afraid of. I was terrible at maneuverability. Honestly, I'm probably still pretty terrible at it. Even with a backup camera, I'm pretty bad at it. And so, I was afraid to make that giant piece of machine submit to me and learn how to conquer it. And so, what was supposed to be a blessing in my mind became a bad report. You ever been there? You know anybody who has the tendency to turn blessings into bad reports? See, the truth is that you can actually come to understand this whole passage and get the fullness of it just between the first two verses and the last two verses of the passage. In Numbers 13, one through two, I want to read this to you once again. The Lord said to Moses, send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe, send one of its leaders. And I don't know if you caught that, but read it again slowly. Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving. It's a gift. It's going to happen. If ten of the twelve spies actually trust it, the giving nature of God, this wouldn't be a spy missions trip, it would be a vacation. But only two of

them caught that. Only two of them understood. And then I want you to look at the last two verses right here. 32 and 33. And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said the land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there of great size. We saw the Nephilim there, the descendants of Anak coming from the Nephilim. We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we seemed the same to them. We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them. What's the problem with that passage? Well, I don't know about you, but if you're spies on a 40-day journey, and you all made it back, and it apparently looks like you did your job, and you were a good spy, then odds are nobody saw you, or they hardly saw you enough to even notice you. So what did they mean that they looked like grasshoppers in the eyes of their enemies when their enemies probably never saw them? See? They seemed small in their own eyes, and thus they projected that others saw them that way as well. I want to talk to the person in the room that you feel unworthy, you feel insignificant, you feel unlovable, you feel small, you feel overlooked. What I've noticed in my life when I deal with these things is I tend to project that other people are viewing me a certain way when really I'm not. I don't feel any way. I think the relationship between sleep and I'm hardly even a thought in their mind. Can you relate? I've noticed in my own life, when I view myself as small, I try to cut God down to my level. We tend to bring others and bring God into the same level that we see ourselves at a lot of times. And y'all, this is a revelation for some of you in the room today. Today, that when we project our smallness, our insignificance, our insecurities onto God and onto other people, we're going to live in a small way. I don't have time to trace the whole narrative of the giants in the Old Testament today, but it's pretty cool how it ends up. All I can say is that giants stop being mentioned in 1 and 2 Samuel with the story of David. And David... David is supposed to be somebody who points to the Messiah, right? Jesus. And Jesus is the one who ultimately slays and conquers the big giants that we deal with. The big giants were not the descendants of Anak. The big giants were not the Nephilim. The big giants are hell, sin, death, the grave, and Satan. And because Jesus slayed those giants, he's given us authority to overcome too. Romans 8, 35 through 37 says this. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble, or hardship, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, for your sake we face death all day long. We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors. Through him who loved us. More than conquerors. It's crazy to me, but I actually think it's super

accurate that only 20% or less actually, 2 out of 12, less than 20% of those spies that went actually had a we can do this mentality. And do you know why they had a we can mentality? They had a we can mentality because they trusted that God was, was giving it to them, and so they had a he can mentality. And if you have a he can mentality, then it will cultivate a we can mentality deep your bones, and you'll stop seeing yourself as small and insignificant, and you'll start seeing yourself as a conqueror. Too many people today operating with a victim mindset. A victim mindset. Too many Christians in America operating with the whole world's headed to hell in a handbasket mentality. Man, I want to be around some people who have some faith. Who trust God for more. See, when you're grounded in your authority in Christ, obstacles turn into opportunities. When you know who you are, because you know whose you are, obstacles become opportunities. I'm trying something new. I have to be better at time up here, so I have my own timer. I want to close today. I want to close today with five minutes. I want to close in this five minutes, and I want to just get real personal for a second. I found myself a few years ago going to trusted people in my life, both inside this church and organization and outside, long-term mentors that I had. And I found myself being this preacher of the good news. And this sounds awful when I say it, but I hope I can just be vulnerable with you. I found myself saying things like, why does the good news feel like good news for everyone? Why does the good news feel like good news for everybody but me? Why does it feel like I can preach grace with the best of them, and yet, when it comes to receiving grace, I don't trust it over my life? That led me to a series of conversations, a lot of tears, so much crying. I've cried so much in front of grown men. I've lost any amount of shame in my feelings and vulnerability. I don't care. I really don't. I don't care to be emotional as a dude. I've cried so much in front of people. Just trying to deal with the things that I've walked through in life. And I met with a mentor one time, and he asked me, Joe, he said, what's a prohibition? And I said, you know, the thing that happened with alcohol, where alcohol was banned. And he was like, yeah, a prohibition is a law or a rule imposed from outside. And he said, so what's an inhibition? An inhibition is a law or rule from inside. And this is what he said, and this changed my life. He said, whatever one generation hears as a prohibition or a you can't, gets passed down to the next generation as an inhibition or an I can't. And it was like something clicked in me. I understood it. We are all a conglomerate of nature and nurture. We all have environments we were raised in, things that were passed down on us, into us, through our family trees and our DNA. And our parents and their parents had things

passed down to them. But whatever doesn't end with one generation will be repeated in the next generation. And so for me, what I had to start doing was I had to start declaring the truth of who God says I am over my life. I made identity statements. I made statements about how I'm going to overcome things. I started looking in the mirror, even when it was tough to believe, and saying who I am in Jesus. And guess what? None of this was hashed out before I got into ministry. This all happened while I was in ministry. Pastors are very broken and flawed people too, friends. And what started to happen was the story I was telling myself has begun to change. I'm still a work in progress just like you, but I'm starting to trust and starting to break over, break out of those things, those I can't do these things, and I hope that you can too. See, only two of the spies made it. Two of the twelve had a we can do this mentality because he could do it. And look what happens. See how this plays out in Scripture. Numbers [14.30](#). It says this, Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. God had to take a whole new generation with some we can leaders. And the other ones, 40 days it took them on that trip, and 40 years they ended up being in the wilderness. And this is the, it's a big statement. I don't expect you to write this all down, but this was my closing thought that I wanted to challenge you with today. And I want to challenge you twofold with this. See this in light of the church, and see this in light of your families. Let's not make the younger generation, fight the spiritual battles that we were too afraid to fight. Conquer your insecurities. Change the script you tell yourself. Learn to stop turning blessings into bad reports, and win the battle for identity and authority in Christ in your heart and mind. Amen? Let's begin to change the stories. You're not just a little grasshopper waiting to get smashed by some giant. You're more than a conqueror. He who lives in you is greater than he who lives in this world. Let's change the script. And this is my closing thoughts. I was a youth pastor in North Carolina my first three years of ministry, and that beautiful 2001 Buick LeSabre, it started breaking down on me in the middle of the road. It was a pretty terrifying experience. Praise God, I'm still here. And so I was at a young adult's dinner, and I needed a new car for the week, like a temporary loaner. And so I asked some friends, I said, Hey, does anybody have a car that I could borrow? And a couple that I didn't even know, they start whispering to themselves, and I had just met them. And the guy looks at me, and he has kind of like a grin on his face. He's like, Hey, I got a car for you. And I said, Okay. And he says, There's one problem with it. And I said, It's a 2001 Buick LeSabre, is it

not? He said, One problem, it's pink. I've already told you I don't like deal with the materialism thing. Like, I cry in front of people. I'm cool with that. I don't have like a lot of insecurities around stuff I drive. Look at my car once again in the parking lot. And I said, Yeah, man. I don't care. That's fine. Well, when I got to his house and I saw the car he was giving to me, the car that's coming up on the screen right now, that same insecurity of that 18-year-old kid who was afraid to take his driver's test and fail started to come up because I'm thinking to myself, Dear God, dear Jesus, please don't let me crash this man's nice pink Plymouth, right? I never even heard of this car before I was in it. But can I tell you something? Because I had passed some tests some years before when I got in that car, I was able to enjoy the ride. And friends, it's not that the giants get less terrifying or that the news gets less terrible. It's that we start to trust him more because he's done it before. He'll do it again. And we can do it because he has done it. Amen? So I want to pray for you this morning. And I also want to give you an invitation. The worship team is coming out right now. And there's a song that we're about to sing. It's new to Grace. It's called Too Good Not to Believe. And it's a song, honestly, where you have to like, you've got to get into it. You've got to go for it because it's a declarative song. And the prayer team is going to come up a little early. Today, rather than after service. And we're going to just start praying for people. And if this message was for you this morning, and you need to respond accordingly, or maybe you just need to, as a sign of faith, come up and worship up front, this space is open. So I'm going to pray, and we're going to dive into worship this morning. Jesus, we just ask, God, that we would have that mentality that we are more than conquerors, Lord. Fill us with your Holy Spirit today, Jesus, as we sing this song and declare the truth of these lyrics over our life, God. We thank you. We thank you, Lord. You want us to enjoy the ride more because we trust in you better. We love you. We praise you. In Jesus' name. And everybody said, amen.