

“Would you rather...” game.

1. Swim with sharks for an hour or get stuck in our elevator for a day?
2. Sleeping in a tent... you felt something go across your legs...you can't find it... would you rather it be a spider...or a snake?
3. Would you rather be held hostage in a hot air balloon...or a submarine
4. Would you rather speak up here today...or not be able to speak at all for a month.

Not great options either way, right? Some of these are funny...but may resonate with some deep fears.

Our family spent a few days in the UP at the beginning of summer. Just strait up through Wisconsin. Anyone ever been to the UP? It was awesome. I'd go back up there right now...it was so fun. It's Eastern time zone so it didn't get dark till like almost 11. It was colder temperatures most days...and the native residents up there have a nick name. Anyone know what it is? Yooper.

We met the owner of a fly shop...Who was also a bi-vocational pastor...we had a good conversation... and He said there's a few things you gotta do if you want to get your Yooper card punched. A couple items on that card are sit in a sauna and jumping into Lake Superior. Bonus points if you go from the sauna directly to the lake.

I'd never sat in a sauna before...the Airbnb we were at had one...and wow...talk about hot...I'm sweating profusely like it was crazy...just nonstop you feel it exiting your pores. I get done...You can only be in there like 45 minutes or you'll die... instead of jumping in Lake Superior...I decide I'm going see how it feels to just take a cool shower...and I thought my heart was going to stop...no way I'm jumping into Lake Superior...

A few days later...Sterling's like...Dad...let's jump into lake superior...we gotta get a punch on that Yooper card. I said...yeah, yeah...fer sure bud...you bet Sterling...no problem...hoping he'll forget.

We had met the neighbor...His name was Bob...Bob was a wild man...a true Yooper through and through...these guys are just built tougher up there...and he owned what used to be a fishing boat harbor...it's a long concrete barrier that protects the boat launch area from the big waves...so at the end of this thing you're out in the Lake to a water depth of about 13' to 15'. And you can see these big boulders...at the bottom.

Sterling puts on his swim trunks and grabs his towel on our last night up there ...and he's like come on dad. Yooper time. Brady's all about it too. They're ready to go...I didn't know this at the time...but I looked it up. The average surface temp of Lake Superior in June...is 43.9 degrees. 44 degrees. Look up some hypothermia stats some time. An extended period in 50 degree water can cause death. Did you know that? I didn't know that. I just know that it's really cold!

So, I make them put their life jackets on...just in case their hearts stop or they lose consciousness I can fish them out of the water. At this point I have no intentions of jumping in. I'm just there to supervise.

They rest of the family...Evan, Clara...they're saying dad... “don't let them do this.” It's too dangerous.

So we get to the edge...and they won't do it. Fear sets in...And we settle into this rhythm of them saying ...I'm going do it...maybe I shouldn't...yes...no...it's late...it's getting dark...the waves are behind us... the

cold dark water in front of us...and I have this thought...If I do this...I could inspire my kids to make a great moment...that we'll remember for the rest of our lives... Dad's...you know what I'm talking about...that's a very motivating thought for us isn't it?

Without saying anything...I take off my shoes...and then my socks...they're like..."no way! You won't do it." I take my phone out of my pocket ... I take off my shirt... I take off my belt... ...And Sterling and Brady start saying..."yes!" do it dad!... and the rest of the family is like ...don't do it dad!

As much as I'm ready physically...I'm mentally paralyzed by fear... I start thinking about it too much. You guys ever do this? At this moment I'm legitimately fearful.

And then Bob comes out of his cabin...he wants see what all the ruckus is about...

There's a video of this moment...would you like to see it? You'll hear the fear in my voice...

(Video Slide 43)

When I hit that water... it was such a shock...I had to force myself to move and swim back to the ladder. It felt like I was in slow motion. (slide-44 )

If Bob hadn't come out...I'm pretty sure it wouldn't have happened.

We all need a Yooper Bob in our life to encourage us when we're scared...don't we? (slide-45 )

Now, forgive the silly illustration but let me ask you this question...How many times have you said, "The End" ...because you were afraid? Maybe it wasn't the last day of a vacation type moment...but you were gripped by fear...and rather than allowing that fear to be the catalyst for a memorable "And then..." you settled for a "The End" ...to a chapter in your story...to a opportunity that God gave you...to a conversation...and relationship...a conflict...that could have led to helping you or someone you love...

The test results come back...lose a job...or a client...it doesn't rain for 4 weeks...a spouse passes away...scary stuff.

We're afraid. We are tempted to just quit. Back away from the waters edge. Say "The End" ...and we end up missing out on an "And then..."

We're in part 2 of this series...because a few weeks ago when Damon preached... he gave away some copies of my book "And then..."

A better subtitle would be...discovering how 2 little words can make a huge difference. ... I've brought few more copies if you'd like one for your family...feel free to grab one as you leave.

The premise is that if you live long enough...we all have these fragile moments in our life...where we are tempted to embrace a "The End" to a part of our story...

When in reality...God's heart is for us to process an "And then..." and keep writing.

Last week we talked about how to embrace an “And then...” after we fail. We looked at the life of David and what he wrote in Psalm 51 that should be an example of how to process an “And Then...” We talked about 3 ingredients needed to move on after we’ve failed. Go back in the archives and get caught up if you missed it.

Today we’re going to look at a passage of scripture and I want to leave you with just 2 questions for us to consider when we’re gripped by fear.

If you brought your bibles...you can turn to the book of Numbers. We will start in chapter 13...

Let me set the scene... The Israelites have just left Egypt...the great Exodus...They have witnessed God’s amazing power as He delivered them from slavery under pharaoh through a series of plagues... you remember reading about this? Amazing deliverance by the hand of God...they have crossed the red sea...on dry ground. Crazy miracle...Can you imagine being there and witnessing something like that. Pillar of fire...column of smoke...God leads them to and through Mt. Sinia...and then God says...the promised land is waiting for you...send 12 spies on a 40 day journey to bring back a report of all the goodness I’ve prepared for them... They send the spies...Check out the assignment from Moses...This is the spy mission...if they choose to accept it... Chapter 13 starting at verse 17... (slide-46)

Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan and said to them, “Go up into the Negeb and go up into the hill country, <sup>18</sup>and see what the land is, and whether the people who dwell in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many, (slide-47) <sup>19</sup>and whether the land that they dwell in is good or bad, and whether the cities that they dwell in are camps or strongholds, <sup>20</sup>and whether the land is rich or poor, and whether there are trees in it or not. Be of good courage and bring some of the fruit of the land.”

All good assignments... that any leader would want to know as they develop a plan or strategy moving their people from point a to point b. Right? This is simple Sun Tzu...Know your enemy...stuff... long before Sun Tzu and the “Art of War”.

After 40 days they come back...let’s keep reading... they come back and give the report...

Continuing with verse 25...(slide-48 )

At the end of forty days they returned from spying out the land. <sup>26</sup>And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. (slide-49 ) They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. <sup>27</sup>And they told him, “We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. (slide-50) <sup>28</sup>However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. <sup>29</sup>The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb. The Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country. And the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan.”

That little word (slide 51) “However”...implies so much... remove it and it’s just facts. They’re simply answering the questions Moses asked. You add that word “However” and takes the promise of milk and honey and turns it in to a just out of reach impossibility... if those spies would have just stuck to the facts...

Caleb, one of the spies, notices this...and tries to jump in... He doesn't like that word "However" either...look at this... vs. 30...(slide -52)

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." <sup>31</sup> 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." (slide -53) <sup>32</sup> 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. ...and we seemed like grasshoppers to them."

What's happening here?

They're scared. Fear has gripped their hearts. I'll admit...as much as I would have hoped to be Caleb in this story...I probably would have been fearful too. I'm mean that report sounds like a pretty legitimate reason to be afraid. What about safety...what about wisdom...If we truly know our Enemy maybe we need a little more training...maybe we need better weapons...better communication systems...we're not ready.

(slide - 54 ) chapter 14... Then all the congregation raised a loud cry, and the people wept that night. <sup>2</sup> And all the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The whole congregation said to them, "*Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!*(slide - 55) <sup>3</sup> *Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?*" <sup>4</sup> And they said to one another, "*Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt.*"

As a husband and dad...that fear sounds legitimate. I don't want my wife and kids to become prey...I can feel that.

I have a theory...When we get scared...we complain. I've done it. I look back on a few seasons of life...when I'm grumbling...and complaining about leadership or the lack thereof...when I'm complaining about circumstances in life...I'm scared. Fear has set in. It's just a theory. I could be wrong. Test it out sometime in your own life.

I worked for an organization that changed directions mid-mission. Every captain of the ship has that prerogative. As it should be. But I started to grumble...just with my inner circle. Those closest to me.... Looking back...I was scared. I was afraid for what this mid-mission shift would mean for my team, my family...and I was afraid for the people I was leading. The one's I sat across the table from in their kitchens casting first mission vision.

I didn't know how to put words to it. But that's exactly what it was... They used words like "out of alignment." Nah man. I was just scared. Gripped with fear...I grumbled.

How about you? Look back on your life...or maybe there's something right now...that's got you grumbling...the little hallway meetings after the meeting...the whispers...well, I heard \_\_\_\_\_. They didn't even ask me...I would have told them...

Leadership tip... coaches, bosses, parents...When you've got a grumbler on your team...ask yourself...what might they be afraid of...It's not always the root...but it can be a good place to start.

When you find yourself wanting to go back to the way things were...you want to go back to Egypt...you'd rather kill the dream in the desert...than be embarrassed by potential failure...It could be fear. Fear of the unknown. Not sure you can trust your leaders...I mean...do they really have all the facts? They certainly don't have my experience. Are they really that prepared?

You're afraid. I know that's true for me.

But it's just a theory.

Let's make sure we're getting this straight... These people have just been delivered from centuries of slavery...They were headed nowhere...same old...same old. And They've now witnessed signs and wonders like no other generation of people in all of world history...They should be thankful, yes? They've also been promised a land flowing with milk and honey. A land to call their own. The "promised" land. God made them a promise...They should be hopeful...right?!

They're not. Gripped by fear...they grumbled.

I love this Caleb guy, He's still trying to salvage this thing... look at what he and Joshua say in chapter 14... verse 7, (slide -56 )

Joshua.. and Caleb.. said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. <sup>8</sup> If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. (slide - 57 ) <sup>9</sup> Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them."

But the people pick up rocks and try to stone Caleb and Joshua...

In today's world...it's easy if you find yourself on the side of hope and truth...being opposed by the majority... Twitter will eat you up and spit you out. They didn't have to worry about Twitter...They've got bigger problems...

Gripped by fear. They grumbled. So what? So they grumbled a little bit. What's the big deal?

listen to what God says... verse 27, God's talking to Moses... (slide - 58)

And the Lord spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, <sup>27</sup> "How long shall this wicked congregation grumble against me? I have heard the grumbings of the people of Israel, which they grumble against me. <sup>28</sup> Say to them, 'As I live, declares the Lord, what you have said in my hearing I will do to you: <sup>29</sup> your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness,

You've heard the expression "Be careful what you wish for"? In their grumbling didn't they say..." Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness!" And God says, That's exactly what will happen.

Here's God speaking in verse 31...(slide – 59)

"But your little ones, who you said would become a prey, I will bring in, and they shall know the land that you have rejected.<sup>32</sup> But as for you, your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness.(slide – 60)<sup>33</sup> And your children shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years and shall suffer for your faithlessness, until the last of your dead bodies lies in the wilderness.<sup>34</sup> According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure.'

That's a 365% return on their grumbling. Yikes!

You guys probably knew this...I just put this together this past week. How many years did the Israelites wander in the desert?

40 years.

What was God's punishment for their grumbling?

40 years of wandering.

So, God's original intent was for his people to go straight from Slavery to Promised land.

What did the Israelites do to not only miss out on the promise land in that moment... but to wander in the desert for 40 more years so that a whole generation could die off? What did they do?

All they did was grumble. In fact, the passage goes on to say that the 10 that spread the bad report...that caused all the people to grumble...they were the ones really responsible for turning the people into grumblers...they were guys doing the meeting after the meeting... in the hallway...questioning leadership...feeding fear... The bible says that they died of a plague that started immediately.

We've got to be careful. And I wonder...

I wonder, how many promised lands have I missed out on because of my grumbling?

How many promised lands have been missed by your organization, by your family...because of your grumbling?

For 40 years the enemy was able to occupy a land promised to God's people...rent free.

If you read on in this chapter...when Moses told the people of God's judgment...there were some that tried to reverse the curse so to speak...they rallied in their own power and invaded the land promised to them. It was too late. God was not with them...they were destroyed.

Do you ever feel like you're wandering in a desert. Knowing there's got to be more...you sense it...you can't put your finger on it...but you find yourself thinking... "Life shouldn't be this hard."

(pause)

I would be wary of any pastor that said your trials and pain are directly correlated to your grumbling. Life is just hard. Jesus and the apostles said it would be. There are things that happen in our life that

are simply a reminder... This world is not our home. Plus we have an enemy that seeks to kill and destroy...

Not all fear leads to grumbling. And grumbling isn't a direct correlation to all of our pain and disappointments.

But there is something to be learned here...

Let's go back a few verses...to one that I skipped...In the middle of God's 40-year sentence on Israel is this little nugget...that leads us to our takeaway today...Listen to what God says about Caleb in vs 24...(slide - 61)

<sup>24</sup> But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit and has followed me fully, I will bring him into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it.

I want some of that! Oh, that God would say my name in that context... "But my servant Scott has a different spirit and has followed me fully...So I will bring him into the land he explored. His descendants will possess their full share of that land."

<sup>24</sup> But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit...an has followed me fully...(slide-62)

Caleb still had to suffer through 40 years of wandering...but why did he get to enter the promised land? He had a different spirit...and he followed God fully.

What does that word spirit mean? It's the Hebrew word "Roo-ack"...and it means, attitude or disposition. But it has a thread in it that means "breath" almost like the exale of speaking a word. I love that. We could assume it means the opposite of grumbling. Since it's a different "Roo-ack" than the rest.

How's your spirit? How's your attitude? How's your disposition? Is it one of hopeful trust in the promises of God...or are you grumbling?

(Pause )... let me ask you a question...

What if the one thing keeping you from the promised land...the land, the future...that God wants for you...is because gripped by fear...you grumbled.

To help us process an "And then..." when we're afraid...2 questions to consider...This is the doggie bag for the week. (slide - 63)

1. How's your spirit? (pause)

It's a question worth sitting with. What do you mean Scott? How's your Spirit? I don't even know what language you're speaking right now. Ask your family. Ask those closest to you... "Hey, Have I been grumbling about anything lately?" How's my disposition? Is your posture open to what's next...or...are you closed off and protecting status quo. Am I killing dreams in the desert?

How's my Spirit? Second question...(slide - 64)

## 2. Are you following God...fully?

No really. Fully? Well, almost... there's this one area that I haven't fully surrendered...I still...I don't...it's not hurting anyone. Come on man. What are you doing?

Some of us are standing at the edge of the water...afraid...

Gripped by fear, don't grumble.

...underline that verse in your bible. Numbers 14:24...put your name in there...

<sup>24</sup> But my servant ...fill in the blank...Jena...Barb...put your name in there, because she has a different spirit and follows me fully, I will bring her into the land and her descendants shall possess it.

How's your Spirit? Are you following God...fully? A couple of questions to sit with this week as we pursue living for... and looking like...Jesus.

Let's pray... (slide – 65 blank)

With every head bowed...maybe you're here today or watching online...and you're thinking...what to do I need to do...to "follow God fully"... I'm a good person...I try to go to church... is that what you're talking about. Not at all. It begins with saying "yes" to Jesus.

You say Scott, Ok...but what do I need to do?

God has made it so easy. The Bible says that "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Pray this prayer with me. This isn't a mystical incantation...you can use your own words...it's simply believing them in your heart. Put a stake in the ground today by saying...

God I admit that I'm a sinner.(wait) I believe Jesus died on a cross to pay for my sins. (wait)I believe he rose from the grave and is alive today. (wait)Right now I confess, Jesus Christ as my Lord. (wait)From this day forward...You're the boss.