



WESTMINSTER  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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# **Claim Your Mountain**

Dr. Bruce Lancaster

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*Ephesians 3:14-21*

*Joshua 14:6-15 (NKJV)*

Have you ever had a dream, a goal, something you've worked so hard for and get so close to getting it, and then it's taken away?

Caleb could be your patron saint. In our story this morning; he had been there.

That's the background of our scripture lesson.

Back in the book of Numbers, chapter 13, Caleb and Joshua and ten others went into the promised land at Kadesh Barnea.

Caleb and Joshua were ready to claim the land as God had promised. His dream was right before him, the promised land where he could move forward and build a new life, a better life for his family.

But the other ten who came back claimed the people there were giants that made them feel like grasshoppers, the cities were large and fortified.

The majority report was accepted: Don't Go Forward.

Because of their actions, circumstances out of his control, his dream fell apart, and he had to go another way, take a different path for his life.

What, do you think, kept Caleb going? How do you, day after day, keep on going when all seems lost?

What was it that made him ready for this day, as we just read, some 45 years later that he realized his dream? As our story says, to step forward and claim his mountain?

Other translations say, “hill country”; it’s his dream, his promised land.

This is what he said, “Look at me, the Lord has kept me alive just like he said he would forty-five years ago. And now, I’m 85, and I’m just as strong today as when Moses sent me into the land.

Now, this day, give me this mountain which the Lord promised.”

“Give me this mountain!”

Do you sense that Caleb had been waiting for this moment every day for the past 45 years? Just as he had been ready to go in then, he is even more ready now.

Just as he had trusted God to give him the land then, he trusts God even more now.

Can you say the same in your own life, your future, your dream, your hopes and prayers; are you ready to claim your mountain?

You see, I believe God has a mountain for each of us, to move forward and claim your future for God’s sake.

Two things we can learn from this story: first of all, it’s not easy to keep a dream alive.

The most unfortunate thing that happens to a person who fears failure is that he or she limits themselves by becoming afraid to try anything new.

Several years ago, maybe you remember it, maybe you knew him, Randy Pausch, a computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon University became a source of inspiration for many Americans.

His *Last Lecture*, given soon after he was diagnosed with terminal cancer, exhorted his hearers to achieve their lifelong dreams.

What it takes, he said, is believing that the barriers we face are only there to prove how much we want those dreams.

To claim your mountain, you have to give yourself a chance.

If you have no faith in the future, you will have no power in the present. Or put it this way: when you have faith in the future, you have power in the present!

When you have faith in the future, you have power in the present!

It's not easy to keep a dream alive, but if God wants it done; if God says it needs to be done, and that you're the one to do it, then you must claim your mountain.

Caleb's faith came from God's faith in Caleb.

Caleb believed in himself because God believed in Caleb.

Caleb had held on to his dream for 45 years, and that brings us to the second lesson of this story: When the moment came, he acted!

We can spend all of our lives stringing and restringing our instruments and never play a tune.

We can create wonderful to-do lists and be really organized, but never act on any of it.

I like the old saying that “you can’t learn to swim unless you get in the water!”

Claiming your mountain is not just praying and waiting, planning and thinking. It is being prepared for when the moment comes: To act!

There’s a song by the country music singer Trisha Yearwood that could have been sung by Caleb:

*Everything in moderation, that’s the way it’s always been. Never gotten out of control, Never hangin’ it out. Always reelin’ it in.*

*I’ve had enough of playin’ it safe, Somebody draw the line so I can blow right past. I need to rock the boat, I need to speak my mind, Just this once to let it all unwind.*

*I’ve got to set this spirit free that’s hiding here inside. I feel like a bird in a cage, It’s time for me to fly. Time for me to fly.*

Caleb had waited on the Lord for 45 years, now was the time to fly.

Like those words from Isaiah 40: *Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not grow weary; they shall walk and not faint.*

Too many Christians today seem to believe that waiting on the Lord means they shall rest on their laurels; they shall sit steadfast in their pews, they shall blame others and find no fault with themselves.

Go back to the story in Numbers: what was said, why they could not claim the land then, their excuses given for saying ‘no’.

Where were the giants that had made the others feel like grasshoppers? Where were the great armies and the fortified cities? Not there!

Everything that everyone was afraid of, not to be found!

What was found was the land that God had promised.

What was found was the life God had promised.

What was found was the mountain Caleb claimed in faith!

What about your mountain? It’s not easy to hold on to your dream, and it’s not a matter of age.

You can be a young person, like David or Ruth; older like Abraham or Sarah; or middle-aged, like Paul or Mary Magdalene.

No matter the age, it is all a matter of faith.

That’s what Paul was praying in his letter to the Ephesians: as you have faith in God who has faith in you to live full lives, full in the fullness of God!

I remember a few years ago when the new Presbyterian Hymnal came out, and that old hymn, “Onward, Christian



Soldiers” was left out, a favorite of so many people, and there was quite an uproar.

But, in my work with churches for redevelopment and revitalization, working with other churches as they prepare for a new minister, in so many cases, when we talked about what they needed to do for their church to move onward, there was an even greater uproar!

Scripture is clear: to claim your mountain, it’s a matter of how you live Paul’s prayer as we read earlier, that glorious inner strength of Christ living in you!

Caleb claimed his mountain and found out what it meant that God is able to do far more than we can ever imagine, more than we can ever ask for in our wildest dreams.

Do you remember the character Robin Williams played in the movie, “The Dead Poets Society”?

He was an English teacher in a private school for boys, and he pounded into his students the Latin phrase, “Carpe Diem”.

Over and over he impressed upon them, “Carpe Diem! Seize the Day!”

The challenge is here for you and me, if we are to claim our mountain, “Carpe Diem pro Christos! Seize the day for Christ!”

This theme from a Sunday School class says it well:

*Today is ours, let’s take it.  
Love is strong, let’s give it.  
A song can help, let’s sing it.  
Peace is dear, let’s bring it.  
The past is done, let’s leave it.*

*Our work is here, let's do it.  
The way seems dark, let's light it.  
The world is wrong, let's right it.  
The road is rough, let's clear it.  
The future's vast, don't fear it.  
Is faith asleep, let's wake it.  
Today is ours, let's live it.*

The challenge is here... The choice is yours: Claim your mountain!

TO GOD BE THE GLORY.



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