The FAITH FACTOR
vs
FEAR FACTOR

4/26/2015
I was having some cashews. I read the ingredients, and it says… cashews. Ok. Right underneath it, "Allergen discloser: this product contains cashews."

So here’s a full disclosure on the next couple messages. Your faith might get challenged. It might get poked around a little, and you may not feel comfortable at times. BUT here’s the thing… we don't GROW in comfort! Growth is often uncomfortable. But the result is blessing, maturity, answered prayers, and lots of other good stuff.

The Bible says in Romans 1:17 “The Gospel ... [By the way, the word "Gospel" is the Old English word for good news.] The Gospel (Good News) shows us HOW God makes people right with himself—that it begins and ends with FAITH. The Scripture says those who are right with God will live by trusting in Him.”

Look at this next verse, Hebrews 11:6 “Without faith it is IMPOSSIBLE to please God, because anyone who comes to Him MUST believe that He exists and that He REWARDS those who earnestly seek Him.” Did you know that God wants to reward you for seeking Him?

Now, if the Bible says, the way to live is by faith, and the way we connect with God is by faith, and without faith it's impossible to please God, wouldn’t it be crucial that we knew what faith is? SO WHAT IN THE WORLD IS FAITH?

First, let me tell you what it’s NOT,

1. Faith is not DESIRE. You can wish for something, you can hope for something, you can sincerely desire something. That doesn't mean it's faith. Faith is NOT desire. Desire may lead you to faith but desire isn't faith. For instance, I remember, my HUGE and constant desire as a teenager was to get a car. But it wasn't faith. Faith and desire are not the same thing. Another thing …
2. **Faith is not pretending something is **TRUE** **that isn't.**
This is an apple. I could say, "I believe it’s a snickers bar," and I have faith that it's a snickers bar. But, it doesn't matter how much faith I say I've got. It's not a snickers bar. Faith is not psyching yourself up and pretending something is that really isn't.

3. **Faith is not a **FEELING.** Feelings often get in the way of faith because you feel a certain way, then you want to go that way whether you have the faith or not. We tend to rely on feelings instead of our faith. A lot of times, faith says, "I'm going to move ahead in spite of my feelings. I'm going to do the right thing in spite of my feelings." That's faith. Also…

4. **Faith is not **BARGAINING with God.** It's not saying, "God, if you'll do this, then I'll do this. I’ll be extra good." God is not a gambler. You don’t bargain with God. That's not faith.

One of the elements of faith, is this…

**Faith is SEEING from God's point of view.**
Faith is a way of SEEING. Faith is a way of looking at the world from God's point of view. It's having God's PERSPECTIVE.

Hebrews 11:1 says, "What is faith? Faith is the confident assurance that what we hope for is **GOING TO HAPPEN**... [not might] and to be **CERTAIN** of the things we do not yet SEE."

Faith has to do with your vision.

Would you agree that there's always more than one way to look at something? What really matters is not how YOU see it but how GOD sees it. Faith is learning to see things from God's point of view, having his vision.

Ephesians 1:18 is the master verse on this, "**I pray that the EYES of your heart will be flooded with light so that you can SEE the wonderful future that God has promised to those he called.**"
But I don't have *eyes in my heart!* What in the world is he talking about? There’s an *unseen* realm in the world that's more real than the *seen* realm. You can see this podium because it's made out of wood and light reflects off it but you can't see the Holy Spirit. However, the Holy Spirit is more real than this podium. The Holy Spirit is going to live forever this podium is not.

The Bible says that everything you SEE is temporary; your body, this building. Everything you see is temporary. It's not going to last. The things that last are actually *unseen*. This is where the faith realm comes in. The Bible has many examples of *seeing with spiritual eyes* or *seeing with the eyes of the heart*, *seeing from God's point of view*.

In Genesis 21. Hagar and her son Ishmael, have been cast out by Abraham, because of his jealous wife Sarah. Hagar is sent out into the desert and runs out of water and she's going to die. Hagar calls out to God, *"Lord, don't let me watch my child die."* It says in verse 19, *"God opened her eyes"* and she saw a well of water in the middle of a desert and they lived.

Then in Genesis 13, God takes Abraham up on a hill and says, *"Look up at the stars, Just imagine, this is going to be your ancestry. These are your descendents, as many as you can count and more."* The Bible says, *"God opened his eyes."* Abraham had a moment of spiritual clarity.

After the resurrection, two disciples are walking down the street, upset and discouraged because Jesus died on the cross, their hopes have been crushed. All of a sudden, Jesus is walking with them and they have a conversation, they invite him in for dinner. But they don't recognize who it is. They sit down, and it says when he blessed the meal, *"God opened their eyes,"* and all of a sudden they realize, it’s Jesus!
That's what God wants to do with you. He wants to open your eyes and you say, "Jesus is right here with me. God has a plan bigger than my plan for my life" and on and on.

I want us to do a couple things. I want to look at what happens when we see with EYES OF FEAR and look at what happens when we see with EYES OF FAITH. Because until we understand how important it is to see everything in life through eyes of faith, you're not going to be looking for that. A good example of this is in the Old Testament in Numbers, 13 and 14.

Here’s the background; Moses has led the nation of Israel to freedom away from Pharaoh and the Egyptians; they've crossed the Red Sea. They've been traveling for about 2 years at a very slow pace because it certainly wouldn't take that long to walk from Egypt to Israel. They’ve got a lot of people and they're coming up to a place called Kadesh. At Kadesh, they're getting ready to cross the Jordan River and go into the Promised Land. This is the land that God promised to them for 400 years, the land that would be their own country and freedom. It’s so exciting!

When they get up to the edge of the river, Moses says, "Okay, before we all go in, I want to send in a special operations spy team. 12 guys will go in and spy out the land and do a little reconnaissance. They're going to check out what's going on and do some fact finding. 12 spies are chosen by Moses and sent in to the land. When they come back, they give a mixed report. Two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua say, "It's incredible. Let's go on in. It's ready for our taking. God has given us truly the Promised Land." The other 10 spies come back and said, "Yeah, it's a great place, BUT…” and they have a whole list of problems on why they can't go in. They're not seeing with eyes of faith, they're seeing with… eyes of fear.
Raise your hand if you've heard of any of these guys. Shaphat...nobody, Igal, Palti, Gaddiel, Ammiel, Sethur, Nahbi, Geuel, Shammua, not the whale, how about Caleb and Joshua. Here's the point, nobody remembers the negative guys. Nobody remembers the critics who say it can't be done. The only people who get remembered are the guys who said, "Let's go do it in God's name." They saw with EYES OF FAITH, the others saw with eyes of fear. Now, because they failed to see with EYES OF FAITH, that entire generation missed God's purpose for their life. God said, "Okay, knuckleheads, you failed the test. You can go wander around aimlessly in the wilderness for the next 38 years until you all die."

All but two that is. Guess which two made it to the promise land? Yep! Caleb and Joshua. Because they saw with EYES OF FAITH. This is why THIS is so important, because I want all of us in the Promised Land NOW!

Let’s look some things that happen when we see with eyes of fear. They're all here in Numbers chapters 13-14. First…

1. **We EXAGGERATE our difficulties.**

Here’s an amazing thing. God has just delivered them from Egypt, the most powerful nation in the world. They've just defeated Pharaoh and now they're worried about some little tribe... how quickly we forget. When you look at your problems with eyes of fear, they get bigger. The more you look at your problem, the more exaggerated it gets. Somebody criticize you, and the more you think about it, pretty soon, you think the whole world is criticizing you. It grows out of proportion.

Numbers 13:27-32, here’s the negative report. The negative spies said, “It's a magnificent land BUT the people living there are powerful, their cities are fortified!
And what's more, we saw GIANTS in the land!” The giants were of the tribe of Skywalker and the force was strong with them. I guess that's another story. Sorry, I got confused.

Other negative spies said, “they’d crush us!” So the majority report of the spies was negative. Let me just say this… The majority report is almost always negative. Anybody who’s going to get something done in this world is going to have to go against the majority report because the majority of people are going to be looking with eyes of fear and not eyes of faith. They said, "These people will crush us.” That word actually means, to eat up. Devour. They said, "They'll eat us alive." They're bullies, they're tyrants, they're NFL linebackers, we'll get crushed.

Only 2 of the 12 spies have faith, Joshua and Caleb and the people trust the majority report because there are always more worriers and more critics and more fearful and negative people. The problem is negative attitudes are contagious.

When they got to the edge, everybody was excited about going into the Promised Land. It was only when 10 came back and said, "We can't do it," that everybody changed their mind and got infected with a negative attitude.

Now, here's what's ironic, they said, "This place is filled with GIANTS and we can't take them on and they're too big for us and too powerful." 38 years later, when the next generation finally DID go into the Promised Land, you know what the enemy said? They said, "We’ve lived in panic for 40 years because we heard about the plagues of Egypt. We heard about what your God had done against Pharaoh, the most powerful leader in the world, and we were scared to death and ready to surrender! Dudes, you needlessly walked around in the wilderness for 38 years!” We exaggerate our difficulties.
Second thing we do when we see with eyes of fear…

2. We **UNDERESTIMATE** our own abilities.

Numbers 33:13 “*We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.*” Talk about low self-esteem. They're saying, we're just a bunch of bugs compared to those guys. They're going to eat us for lunch. Notice, they say, "*We saw ourselves like grasshoppers... in our own eyes,*" that's their self-image and it says, "*And we look the same to them.*" How do they know how they looked to their enemy? They didn't. What happens is you tend to project your fears on people around you and that's what they're doing there. They're projecting their fears. They’ve been slaves for 400 years, they’re now free but they're still mentally enslaved and see themselves as helpless. They're enslaved not by a Pharaoh but by an image of themselves.

Let's just stop here for a minute. Years ago, people might have said stuff about you that wasn’t true, but you believed them. They might not even be in your life anymore but you're still believing their lies. You're still enslaved to their image of you. Somebody, a parent or a coach or a friend or sibling who said, "You're uncoordinated," and so you think you're uncoordinated. Or "You're never going to amount to much," so you think you're never going to amount to much. "You're not good at anything," on and on. They told you all this crud. Here’s the thing… **YOU'RE NOT IN EGYPT ANYMORE!** That's a self-imposed prison.

A number of years ago we hosted a Celebrate Recovery group. I believe Celebrate Recovery is so much **better** than ANY other recovery addiction program. Here’s one reason why… if you go to AA, they keep you saying this for the rest of your life, you say, "Hi, my name is George and I'm an alcoholic."
The guy may have been sober for 30 years but he stands up and his FIRST identity is, "Hi, I'm George and I'm an alcoholic." He's still identifying with his weakness, with his problem, with his struggle. At Celebrate Recovery, they say, "Hi, my name is George and I'm a follower of Jesus who struggles with alcohol." See the difference? Your primary identity is NOT your sin. It's NOT your weakness, it's NOT your failure. Your primary identity is in JESUS! "I’m a believer who struggles with loneliness, or codependency, or worry." I’m a believer, a Jesus follower. You're seeing with eyes of faith instead of eyes of fear. We overestimate the problem and we underestimate our abilities.

Some of the spies saw these guys as tall and they said, "These guys are giants." What's interesting is, later, when they went in, they found out that the tall people were actually calm and the peaceful and they had nothing to be afraid of. The tall people were not warriors. It was all in their mind. There’s giants in the land!

Third thing that happens ...

3. We get DISCOURAGED.

Numbers 14:1 says, “Then all the people began weeping aloud, and they carried on all night!” They had a giant pity party. Poor us, and they're now crying and weeping because they don't get to go into the Promised Land. Waa-waa-waa. What's keeping them out is…their fear! When not living by faith. We get discouraged. Then number 4, we move from discouragement to griping.

4. We GRIPE about everything

Numbers 14:2 after the all night pity party, it says, "all the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron... [They picked on the leaders.] ‘We wish we had died in Egypt!’ they wailed, ‘Or even here in the wilderness!’" First, they cry and now they complain.
Here's the thing; *highly critical* people are always *highly insecure* people. When you find somebody who is critical of other people it’s because they're insecure and think if I don't feel good about me, I certainly don't want you feeling good about you. I gripe about my life and everything else. We exaggerate the problem, underestimate our abilities, we get discouraged, we gripe about our lives and then…

5. We eventually give up and… **BLAME** God.

Numbers 14:3 they said, "*Why is the Lord bringing us to this land to be killed with swords... We'd be better off going back to Egypt!*" What they're saying is we know better than God. They're blaming God for not letting them go in the Promised Land. God isn't holding them back. It's their fear that's holding them back. Now, all of a sudden they're remembering the good old days of Egypt. *What* good old days? Four hundred years of slavery, why would anybody want to go back to Egypt? It was *slavery!* But it was safe.

A lot of people get stuck in *safe slavery*. They're enslaved by a *relationship* or a *job*. They're enslaved by a *fear*, or they're enslaved by a *habit*, or they're enslaved by a *compulsion*, they really don't like it but at least it's predictable, it's comfortable. I know what's in Egypt. Some people do that. Some confuse slavery and safety. They're not the same thing. I know it's a bad situation but at least it's predictable. I know this habit is self-defeating but it's comfortable. It's just who I am.

There’s no real freedom without taking risks. Safety and freedom are on opposite ends of the scale. You're either moving more towards safety and slavery or you’re moving more toward taking risks and freedom. God made you to be a risk taker. God made you to live by faith. Don't die in the desert.
Now, let’s contrast all this with what the Bible says happens when we start to live our lives SEEING everything by faith, learning to be a dreamer, learning to see God's vision, learning to look at things not as they are but as they could be. Looking with eyes of faith NOT… **eyes of fear**. How do you do that and what difference does it make in my life? Would you like to know? Let me explain this to you… Next week… same time, same place.

Dear Jesus, help us to see with eyes of faith. Open the eyes of our hearts, Lord. We want to see you. Lord, stretch our faith so that we might be more the man or woman that you want us to be. We open our lives and hearts to you. We want to learn to love and trust you more. We want to put our faith in you. In your name we pray, Amen.