

## “Joshua: Lose Doubt”

Dr. Jeff Meyers, Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church of Conyers

September 18, 2011

I do want to encourage you this morning to open your Bible to two passages in the Old Testament; the Book of Numbers, chapter 13 and the Book of Joshua, chapter 1. Technically speaking, this is the fourth and the sixth book in the Bible and oftentimes we don't have a lot of sermons or messages or even Bible studies from the Book of Numbers.

You may be a first time guest or visitor or you may have been here all of these past six weeks. We have come today to week seven in a series through the Old Testament and some of the most famous characters in the Old Testament and in the Bible at large entitled “Be A Loser.” What are the things in life that we need to lose if we're going to be positioned and prepared to do whatever God would have us to do in life?

Today could not be more fitting, week seven, we talk about losing doubt, losing that emotion as you will hear later, losing that feeling that what we believed God was speaking may not happen; what we believed was going to occur may not occur. For those of you who seven weeks ago, in the literalness of “Be A Loser,” began the process of changing the way you eat, changing the way you exercise and how you treat your body, it is this time period in that process that you begin to get discouraged because you get used to the scale going down and all of a sudden you have one of those plateau weeks or one of those weeks where it actually goes up. And you are thinking how did that happen and doubt begins to set in. I don't know what issue it is or what it is in life that you believe you need to lose to be better positioned for God to work through and minister in your life, but it is usually after about six to eight weeks of being on that journey that an event occurs, a situation happens or some news comes that tends to make you doubt that what you began is actually going to come to fruition.

Today we come to the Book of Numbers, chapter 13, one of the classic

stories in all of the Bible about the power of doubt. Numbers, chapter 13 is a famous story I'm sure you're familiar with but you may not have known it is in Numbers 13. This is the story where the Israelites have come out of Egypt; they've come through the Red Sea. They are in what we know as the wilderness experience and they are waiting for God to deliver them to the Promised Land; they did not come out of Egypt just to be in the desert. They were actually headed toward what we know as the Promised Land, Canaan, the other side of Jordan; as we will read here, the land that flowed with milk and honey. What happens in this passage of scripture is that one from all of the twelve tribes of Israel, twelve spies, are sent into the land to give a report of what they find. And when they come back, two of them believe what God said and ten of them do not. Let's pick the story in Numbers 13:26. "26And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. 27And they told him, and said, We came unto the land where thou sent us, and surely it flows with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it." Let me stop for just a moment. God promised them it would be a phenomenal land and it was exactly as God said. Remember that point. It didn't look a shade different. Now we pick it up in verse 28. "28Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. 29The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. 30And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. 31But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. 32And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. 33And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and

we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.” If you were to continue to read this story, when you get to chapter 14 it is the prevailing mood of the naysayers, the doubters, that takes over and they convince all of the masses that they cannot inhabit the land. Even though it is exactly what God said it would be, they convince everybody it can’t happen. You may be wondering yourself why it is that God had them dwell in the wilderness for forty years? Was it just some random number? In fact, in Numbers 14 it was a forty day experience that the spies went into the land and came back with a doubtful report and God said I’m going to give you a year in the wilderness for every day that you doubted Me. The whole story of the forty years in the wilderness is based on the people of God doubting God even though they saw the promises of God.

What I want to deal with this morning is two simple things when it comes to doubt: what causes doubt to creep up in our lives and what is the cure when doubt comes in? Every single one of us, if not today, in very recent days, every one of us deals with doubt. We doubt if we can pay that bill; we doubt if that relationship will ever work out; we doubt if what journey we’re on will ever come to fruition; we doubt if what God said will really happen. So what actually causes doubt? I think there are two things that are in Numbers 13 that caused doubt. The first one is this: when we live a life by sight and not by faith. When you base everything in life by what you see, what you feel and what you smell it is going to cause doubt. Even though these men saw what God promised, it was the Amalekites, the Anaks, the giants that they saw that they could not live by faith. Let me state from the very beginning that I personally, and I know many of you as well, am trusting my entire eternity on a person by the name of Jesus Christ. Everything: I am trusting Heaven versus hell because a man by the name of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, lived a sinless life, died a sacrificial death and arose from the grave three days later. But hear me clearly: I’ve never seen Jesus. I’ve never audibly heard Jesus; I’ve never touched Jesus; I’ve never smelled Jesus. I am trusting that what God said is true: I am a sinner in need of a Savior, I am trusting

that Jesus is the answer, and I am trusting that the blood shed on Calvary on the cross is enough to save even me and even you. That is faith. Now let me ask you a ridiculous question: if I am willing to live eternity by faith, why am I not willing to live today by faith? If I am willing to step into death trusting Jesus, having never seen Him, never touched Him, never smelled Him, then why do I not trust the Lord on everyday events? I'm going to tell you why: because we start living by sight and not by faith. Let me share with you how this happens. It's because most of us, if not all of us, are plagued by past mistakes. Let me show you what I mean by that. I want you to look at Numbers 13:29. After they come back and give the report that they doubt that God can do it, notice the first group of people (we will talk about the Anakim in just a moment), the Amalekites, dwell therein. It's as if the first people they saw is this group of people. Why is that so significant? Back in Exodus, chapter 17 it speaks about a group known as the Amalekites, technically the grandchildren of Esau. In that respect, the Lord told them that they would always struggle with the Amalekites. Now here's what's important: the Lord never said they would always lose to the Amalekites; He just said they would always struggle with them. They would always battle with them; there would always be a war with them. And when they saw the Amalekites, I know what they were thinking: "Oh great, the scale went up again!" "Oh great, they did not call again!" "Oh great, I did not get the promotion again!" "Oh great, another bill came in!" Whatever it is that has so tripped you up in the past, whatever has given you such heartache in the past, whatever it is in the past that you have so struggled with and this fall you have said, "Lord, I need this out of my life," guess what? It crept up again. And that's what happens: it plagues us because we begin to think back to past failures. We begin to look at times when we did not allow the Lord to work in our lives, times when we did not trust Him faithfully, times when we gave in to temptation or we just quit or whatever it is. And that's exactly what happened to these guys. The whole reason the Israelites said we can't go is because they said we've never beat them before, what makes us think we can beat them now? They were plagued by the past. But they were also paralyzed by the present. Verse 28, the children of Anak;

you get to verses 32 and 33 and it says they were giants in the land. They saw their present situation and they literally said to the Lord, “Lord, You don’t know how big this is.” “You don’t understand what an amazing amount of debt I am literally under.” “You don’t know how bad this relationship is.” “You don’t know how sick I am.” You don’t know whatever and you can fill in the blank. So when we start living by sight and not by faith we get focused on the past and it plagues us; then we look at our present and it literally paralyzes us where we don’t do anything and the Lord never intervenes because we see this massive entity in front of us and we begin to doubt and say, “God, I just don’t think You realize how big this is.” That’s what happened to them and they began to doubt. So the first thing that really happens when we begin to doubt is we begin to live by sight and not by faith. But there’s a second thing that occurs: we begin to live by feelings and not by facts. If you do not know yet, feelings will mess you up. And it doesn’t matter how you feel, it does not change the facts. You say, “I just don’t feel like two plus two equals four,” I hate to tell you; it does. You can get upset all day long but the fact is two plus two equals four. What are the facts of this passage? The facts were there is a land flowing with milk and honey. Did it come true? Absolutely. In fact, if you continue reading the story the grapes were so large that it took two men and a pole just to put one bushel of grapes on. The grapes were literally the size of tomatoes today. Everything was exactly as God said, “It’s all there, I told you there were going to be people there.” The facts were it was just what God said it would be. But what were the feelings? I want you to notice what they say at the end of verse 31. “They are stronger than us.” How did they know? One of the things that I love seeing in sports is the underdog winning the game. And one of the things that I say to my children when they say, “Dad, I didn’t think they would win,” is “Son, that’s why they play the game.” You can’t just base it on surely they are going to win. They said they’re stronger than us then you get to verse 33: we’re like grasshoppers. In other words, they are multiple times bigger than we are. Do you see the feelings that are coming out when they are plagued by the past and paralyzed by the present? They see it as such a massive thing that there is no way they can win.

One of the most indelible memories in my life was particularly my entire freshman year in college; that time of moving out from home and living in a dormitory with 900+ eighteen to nineteen year old guys. That's just an experience in and of itself. But when you get in that dormitory setting, they put you in hallways. Each hallway probably had 50 to 60 guys. There was a rare case where somebody came and lived with a roommate they knew from high school or had grown up with, but most of us didn't know anybody. And they just throw you in this whole hallway and you have this process of learning to know one another. And one of the great things about moving away, particularly college but even the military or any other item is nobody knows your past. People changed their names. Why? They were called by one name but they wanted to be called by their middle name. And one of the great lies that is always told, and I'm sure this happens in the military and in the workforce, but particularly at college, is that everybody was a great high school athlete. Because how do they know? Now today is a little different thanks to Google and Bing and all these internet searches where you can actually look it up. But even in my day you would have to find an old newspaper or microfiche; you could just tell any lie you wanted to. Well, one of the truths in my hallway was we had a young man whose knees looked like a road map because he had had so many surgeries on his knee. I'm personally convinced if he hadn't been so injured, he would have made a phenomenal defensive lineman in college. He stood about six-three, maybe six-four, he was about 350 pounds and he was as fast as I was. The only problem was he couldn't go side to side because his knees were so injured. His name was Sean; he was a massive teddy bear of a guy, just a lot of fun. One day there were about eight or ten of us in one of those small dorm rooms and we were joking around and playing. And I don't know how it came up but there was a guy in the room who weighed about 150 pounds and someone started joking about what would happen if Sean and this guy decided to wrestle. We started saying we want to see this happen so, as college students do, they started wagering. "Hey, I'll buy you dinner." "I'll wager you this." "I want to see this happen." And of

course Sean is saying, “I don’t want to hurt the guy. I don’t want to kill him.” Well, all you have to do is kind of say a little sic-um to a bulldog so to speak and we got them going, we’ve got the testosterone flowing. And the next thing you know, we’ve got a full-fledged wrestling match taking place in the dorm room: 350 pound defensive lineman and 150 pound English major. Three matches; three to nothing: the English major won! When it was all said and done, he kind of shook his head and said, “Guys, I hate to tell you but in high school I was a wrestler.” He knew the moves; he knew the maneuvers. And I’m going to tell you when 350 pounds falls, it falls hard! Every one of us in that room felt that there was no way he could win. We even joked about making sure the ambulance was on call because he might die in this process. Even the big guy felt there was no way the little guy could win. But what was the fact? One of them was an injured football player and the other one was a skilled, slick wrestler. When we begin to live by feelings and not by facts, doubt will creep in every time. What were the facts in this story? The facts are that’s your land. The facts are it’s just like I told you. The facts are if you go, I will provide. What were the feelings? They’re stronger and they’re bigger. And that’s what causes doubt: living by sight, and not by faith; living by feelings, and not by facts. So what’s the cure? We have to fast forward over to the Book of Joshua, chapter 1. As I mentioned, it’s forty years before they actually possess the land. In this story Moses has died because of his disobedience when he struck the rock that he was not supposed to. We pick up the story in the Book of Joshua 1:1-9, and we now are about to go into the land of Cana. What is the cure for the doubt in our life? “ 1Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spoke unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ minister, saying, 2Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. 3Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. 4From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun,

shall be your coast. 5There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of your life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. 6Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shall thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them. 7Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou may observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou may prosper wherever you go. 8This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shall meditate therein day and night, that thou may observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shall make thy way prosperous, and then thou shall have good success. 9Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee wherever thou go.”

This is the cure. They are on the edge of the Jordan River and they are about to go in. If you read the rest of Joshua, they’re going to put a memorial of stones of remembrance. The priests are going to step in with the ark and when they go in the water is going to part again and they are going to go into the land. Everything is going to look and be just as God said. So how is doubt cured in our lives? Two things and the first thing is this: we have to understand and believe the provision of God. What does God desire to provide and give provision in our lives? I think the first thing under this aspect is understand the location. Look at verse 3, “Every place that your foot shall tread.” He didn’t say just the south and the east, not just the west and the north, not just the Hittites and the Jebusites. He said wherever you put your foot, if you do what I say you’re good. Do you know what that means? Every struggle, every addiction, every shortcoming, every temptation, every sin, every doubt, anything that can and does creep up in any of our lives. How many times have you said, “I just doubt that God can take care of this one. He may be able to take care of that but not this.” That’s what happens. The cure is believing it doesn’t matter what it is, what genre it presents itself, there is not anything that if the Lord says I’m going to do it that He cannot do. He can do it all - every place you put your foot. He even goes on in verse 5 to say no man will be able to stand before you.



Oftentimes when we're doing what the Lord asks us to do and not living in doubt, but living in faith, there is a multitude of people the enemy sends to discourage us. And He says no man can stand before you. Romans, chapter 8 speaks that incredible passage that neither life, nor death, nor principality, nor power, nor any man can separate us from the love of Christ Jesus. He says there is no man that will stop you and no place you cannot go. Do you realize there is nobody's opinion and no human being on this planet who is capable and strong enough to stop God? None of them and yet we say, "Oh but God, they're just bigger. They're just stronger. There's just no way." So when you look at the provision of God, He says every place you go, every person you run into, He says, "I can if I speak it." So what are the limitations? Surely there's got to be a limit to this. Look in verse 5, "all the days of your life." Now I'm going to give you a little Hebrew lesson because originally the Book of Joshua was written in Hebrew. Do you know what the Hebrew word for all is? All. Let me give you a little statistical information; I don't have the exact research behind this but I believe it. When we're praying and we're dealing with God about a subject matter in our lives, I believe personally that two percent of the time God says yes. I believe that two percent of the time He says no. But I believe about ninety-six percent of the time He says wait. And oftentimes we say, "But God, I was all onboard Sunday morning, it's now Monday. What's wrong with You?" or "It's been a week, God." Do you realize the Bible says 1000 years is as a day so unless you've waited 1001 years, you're not out of God's timeframe. Oftentimes whatever it is that we begin to doubt, we doubt not because we don't believe God but we just haven't seen – once again living by sight and not by faith. It took them forty years to see this transpire. It took Noah 120 years. You could go through all kinds of situations in the Bible, but that's the problem when we begin to limit God that surely it must happen in four years, it must happen in fourteen years, it must happen in forty years. The Lord says, "It's My timetable, I will take care of this." That's the provision of God and we've got to believe that. So what's our process? What's our procedure? How do we fit into this equation? Beginning in verse 7 it tells us that we need to have a very

specific attitude. It says we need to be strong and courageous. Four times in the Book of Joshua, chapter 1 it says be strong and courageous. That means eliminate doubt, questions and fear in your life; be strong and courageous. Let me introduce to you if you do not know, the Meyers' family motto. I don't know if your family has a motto, but we do. We haven't written it down on anything but this is our family motto: we are the family that does not quit. You may take us out but we will not quit. Why? Be strong; be courageous. Do you know what you see in Joshua that you didn't see in any of the others? He would not quit. He wouldn't quit believing. He was strong and he was courageous. And that is the attitude. And I understand I am the eternal optimist; the glass is always half-full with me, but I have just come to a belief after following Jesus Christ for over thirty years that there is nothing He can't do and no place He can't go. And this does not just restrict itself to finances: if it is His will it is His bill. And oftentimes that has nothing to do with finances, by the way. That means whatever He has spoken, He's got to pick up the tab for, whatever that is. And that is the attitude we must possess of strength and of courage. But there is an action. Notice it says we are to "observe according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it." Verse 8, "The book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth." Do you realize that in these three verses the Lord teaches us the same thing in Ephesians 6 where it talks about the spiritual armor of God. The sword of the spirit, the Word of God is the only offensive weapon. Do you realize He says the only thing you need is this. Wow! Oftentimes we think I need that plus an education; I need that plus whatever it may be. The Lord makes it very clear to the Israelites: go across the Jordan River and just do what I tell you to do. Here's the problem: you and I in our culture have become an incredibly Biblically-illiterate society. How can we lose doubt, how can we trust what God said if we don't even know what God said? It's hard to do it. If you don't have the instructions you can't build whatever it is that you need to build in life. So I want to give you a little hint and I hope that over the course of the next few moments I am preaching to the choir. The first thing is this: how do you observe the Word of God because it says you need to meditate day

and night. Can I be honest with you? I know that doesn't happen overnight. None of you is going to leave today and start reading the Bible three and four hours a day. I know that. You're not going to get up at four o'clock in the morning and just start meditating on the Word of God. That doesn't happen. So does that process? How do you get from where you are today to where God needs you to be to lose doubt? The first thing you need to do is start. You've got to start. One of the things that I loved about what Julie Hadden, who was on the Biggest Loser television show, shared at Dine by Design was this: she said here were people who had not exercised in years and that first day they got in the gym, how badly they hurt. You've got to start somewhere. So let me encourage you about somewhere to start, this is revolutionary thinking, you need to write a book about this, sell it and make millions: come to church. It's really simple: come to church. Why is that? You know this time that I'm up here before you as we study the Word of God takes roughly thirty minutes. Do you realize though that I've done all the hard work for you? I've spent twenty-plus hours and you're getting twenty hours worth of Bible time in just thirty minutes. I've taken it, put it all together, systematized it, organized it and even have it all start with the same letters for you. Why? I believe that if you will just take what God gives us here together as a church family, you can chew on that all week long. It's a meal you can just keep eating. You've got to start somewhere. Where do you start? Start here. If you don't know where else to start, start here. I promise you I will do due diligence to make sure you get what the Bible says. I will spend all the time and the labor; you just can take it, absorb it and go live it. Start there but then you've got to continue; you've got to sustain that pace. You ask, "How do I sustain it?" New, completely revolutionary thought: go to Bible study. Go to a Sync class, go to a Sunday School class. And I know there is a good majority of you who are already plugged in and a part of one of those, but I want to deal today with the two excuses I hear from people all the time of why they're not in a class. The first one is usually this: I just can't find one that fits me. If you're an adult we have over forty options. Try them. You say I'm not married; we have singles classes. We have men's classes; we have women's classes. Anybody

who has come through our New Members Class the last couple of years since I've been the pastor will testify that what I am saying is what I say every time: if you are coming to church on Sunday morning and all you have is one hour, don't come to the worship service – go to Bible study. Why is that? You can get me on the internet. You can listen to this on the radio. You can download it to your iPod. You can take care of that but you cannot get that dialogue with other believers except in a Bible study class where you are sharpening one another and asking questions. Do you realize that if you raise your hand to ask a question during these thirty minutes you will not be called upon? But in your Sync class you can raise your hand and say, "I don't get this, I don't understand this." And over the process of time, you will study and you will learn. Some of you have possibly noticed the last couple of weeks my wife hasn't been with us in this first service. She's been a part of this first service ever since we've been here. You may be wondering why is she not here? My wife has a burden for women to know the Bible and we have an enormous amount of people, and particularly women in our second service, who are not in Bible study. That's where she is right now; she's teaching the Bible to women who did not previously go to a Bible study. It's that important in your life so we've changed our lives because of it. You've got to start somewhere. You've got to sustain it. But then it's got to become that saturation point where you literally can't live without it. How do I get there? I promise you, if you'll do step one and step two then step three will come a lot easier to where you literally can't go a day without it. But what happens? You say, "If I let the Word of God be in my life and I don't doubt, what will happen in my life? You will begin to have Jericho experiences. Let me tell you what a Jericho experience is. If you continue to read the story of taking the land of Canaan, they come to Jericho. Remember what they said. "The city is walled. The people are fierce. They've got weapons, we don't." They go to the city of Jericho and Joshua says, "Okay Lord, how are we going to defeat this one?" Do you know what God tells them? "I want you to begin today. I want you to start by marching around the city today. Don't do anything but march around the city. Then I want you to sustain it by doing it tomorrow

and the next day and the next day. And on the seventh day, I want you to walk around it seven times. I want you to saturate it by the dust of your walking and then the walls will come down and you don't even have to fire a shot." Can you imagine sitting in the War Room of Washington, D. C. with that policy? Can you imagine saying, "Mr. President, I believe that if we'll just take this platoon and march around the city seven times, on the seventh day it's a done deal!" You say how did that happen? That's what God told them to do. How did Naaman get healed of leprosy? God said go wash in the water. How did the blind man get healed? Jesus, God in flesh, touches him and says go wash in the pool. Do you realize every time people in the Bible do what God told them to do it worked out. You say but it doesn't make sense – exactly. The more you begin to become a part of the Word of God, the more you're going to start doubting the world and believing God. As we prepare for our time of invitation, I just want to ask you what's your doubt? What are you struggling with? And it doesn't matter what you just thought of, the Lord has an answer if we will go to Him and let Him instruct us. Let's pray.