

Giants in Our Lives

By Ron Hafer

[Musical intro]

Announcer:

Well good morning, it is my distinct honor and privilege to introduce to you, uh my boss, uh but more importantly my my friend, and a mentor in a very real sense, uh Ron Buster Hafer, our beloved chaplain. There are very few faces on this campus that are more beloved than that of Ron Hafer. He um, he's a local boy, did an undergrad here at Biola, and then went on to do his seminary work uh right here at Talbot School of Theology. And Ron has been chaplain here for 40 years. He is the best chaplain and worst chaplain in Biola's history.

[Laughing and cheering]

He won't be afraid to tell you, so please join me in welcoming Ron Hafer.

[Applause]

Ron Hafer:

In my--

[microphone feedback]

--whoa, in my old age I thought well I'm gonna, you know everybody else does this, they have PowerPoint and they have uh, media splash, and you know you have these special effects you know. So I thought I'll have my very own. So I got-so I uh prepared a disk with a scripture on it and uh took it down in a for-chapel one. And uh Rebecca smiled and said "Is this a joke?" There's nothing on this. So there we go. So I'm just here to tell you that I'm still learning in this business of chaplain-ing as we go along.

Hey, this is an exciting day. I talked with uh, a friend of mine. I think he's still a friend, just days ago and he is, uh, he's just a young guy. He's 65 and uh, he's-he's doing what I'm doing, or he has, then, and he called me to let me know he was so excited that that he's going to retire. He's counting the days till he retire. And I thought "What a wimp!"

[Audience laughs]

You know that-what do you do, you know what a wussy guy. Sixty-five, just a kid. And he's fading. And so I-and I told him those things, then I said "You're going to be bored silly, you're going to be looking to me for a job. Don't look to me buddy. You're not gonna-you're not going to find it." Oh, my glasses. That would be interesting if I didn't find my glasses. But it doesn't matter, because--

[Audience laughs]

--no no it really doesn't. This is exciting, because what--no no I've got--no no. This--I know--this is, I'm speaking on hardships today. That's the truth, I'm talking about giants of opposition and hardships. So how fitting that a guy who is nearly legally blind, as she passes her glasses, those are--those are just really pretty sunglasses, I can't do those you know? But how--that that I would have the challenge, because we have the second passage that's ready for us. No this is good. This is really this is very exciting. I'd like to pray uh again and then dismiss. No no no.

[Audience laughs]

So that's--what a hoot. So this is the way we're going to do it, of course. Because uh, all I would do as I turned to Numbers 13--you may turn, and uh and I might have different ones read verses out loud. That would be good. Uh no no. We'll do that--we're talking about giants of opposition. We're talking about hardships in life. How fitting that I would lose my glasses. And go--so what I'll do, I'll just refer--I'll say "Oh this--everyone knows this passage. Why you guys know this." So Numbers 13, you'll--and I'm starting in verse 26--but before, uh I talk about this amazing man Caleb and how he handled giants of opposition and hardship in his life, I want to tell you my second--second favorite story I told to the freshman and new students on my first Ralphie, and the seniors--some of them were scattered around--they said "Oh, you're still telling Ralphie!" Well I'm still telling Carter as well. I wanna tell you about Carter the school giant and the school bully in Flood Junior High in Englewood, Colorado. Yes, for those of you who are from Colorado, Flood is the junior high that burned down. No, I had nothing to do with that. Contrary to all all of the reports.

Um Flood Junior High was seventh, eighth, ninth grade junior high. Really an interesting mix of ages, because oftentimes seventh graders are extremely small and ninth graders can be extremely, extremely large. In fact, before I describe Carter the school giant and the school bully, just want to scan the crowd to make sure he's not here. Good. No no. Carter was big, and dumb, and uuuugly. Oh did you. Oh look. Look. Oh praise God. Who is that. OK start. Can I start all over. Forget.

[Audience laughing]

No-no no no. And uh, and Carter was in the ninth grade, but he drove his car to junior high legally. Legally! Alright so, only God knows how many-how old he really was. 17 or 18, you know he was massive. I mean OK, this is all I have to illustrate with, do not get gold but just use your imagination alright? You know.

[Blows] [Audience laughs]

You know? And and uh, uh and he and he had a full growth beard, so he is very intimidating, and big, and and not really very pretty, and-and a bully. He's a-he's the worst of all worlds. Carter would beat up somebody every night after school and we would watch it. I know what you say. "Why? Why would you gather to watch something like that? How sad." Because, we were junior highers. That's right. And I'd like to say this, about to junior highers.

[Mimics scream] [Audience laughs]

Right? God bless them, who else will. Right? OK.

[Audience laughs]

So here we are, we gathered at rumble city, are you ready to rumble! And all these little twerps are there and of course Carter's there, no one is stupid enough to fight him, I mean if you have a death wish you know, you might throw a rock at him and run but. So Carter in the back, and he's waiting for for is for his rumble of the night, and out walks my little buddy's Big Brother. Ninth grade, as tall as Carter, but as skinny as a rail. Scared spit, he's never had a fight in his life, he hasn't killed a fly in his life, he's a gentle, slow, but he's tall and skinny. Carter grabs him and says "You better not knock this chip of wood off my shoulder." And it was-that there actually was one, you know what? You look on this guy's face s-said "I'm going to breath"

[Mimics crying]

"I'm not moving!" And of course Carter goes "boop" and the chip drops, and Carter says "Ohhh" and the guy thought "I'm dead." Carter pops a guy right in the nose, now that's--if you have a weak stomach that's about as bad as it gets for a while--and the kid falls to the ground. He deserved the fall, rolled over on his stomach, smart, because he thought you can't get hit in the nose if you're on your stomach. But Carter's a bully, a giant bully! I throw in the word "giant" because we're going to work that into the message later on. And he jumped on the guy--but now that I've got my glasses I'm dangerous--so he jumped on the guy, took his hand smooch the guy's

face down in the sand. And now the bleeding nose, you can see little red trickles. You know-well I mean you know, I'm not going to call on you because some of you would actually stand and share, and I want to basically have all the time, but if you-you know if I said "How does this make you feel?"

And I was standing there, and I was-I didn't say it, but I was thinking "Som-somebody ought to do something about this." Roy, who is my uh, my buddy, I know you'll find this hard to believe I was short--

[Audience laughs]

I was the littlest person in the school, but-and my buddy was about my size, but I was a little hit-I know you'll find out-it's a little heavier than the average. And my buddy was this little skinny guy. Uh, life has its defining moments. Our class at Englewood High, in a few weeks, we'll gather and we will celebrate our fiftieth reunion, that's hilarious! fifty-fifty-that means I'm like 90 or something like that. And we-we remember this-our-our-this this was his moment in time. Let me see Roy? Are you here? No. Well Roy in this moment, he screamed, and then he ran and he jumped on the back of this giant. And immediately after he hit, he thought "What have I done? What have I--" And I-I've likened his time on Carter's back to riding a tiger. It's a lot of fun until you have to get off, right? What are you gonna do. And so Carter is swatting away. Roy is trying desperately to stay on, he's wrapping little gnarly arms and legs-those little sc-scrawny, and and and so he he reached his left arm around um, well Carter didn't have a neck, but where would,

where would normally be a neck. You know, you know. And uh, well you just picture that don't you?

And-and-and then he locked his wrist, and uh, they call the LAPD and the fire de-they got-locking them off. It's the choking move. And uh, if that happens very long there's a shortage of blood and oxygen that's flowing to the brain, which we suspected of Carter for a long time anyway.

[Audience laughs]

But now, but now we knew. And and Carter actually started to spaz he start-his eyes crossed, and-and I had this great view, and-and then his tongue kind of shot out, and then he started to pass out and it was one of those one of those if we were Christians, we weren't we're a bunch of little pagans.

[Audience laughs]

But if we were Christians we'd have sang "God is so good". And if Andrew Brain was there, semi-charismatic, his hands would have been like "Oh", you know? But-and so Carter is passing out.

[makes scared noise]

And we're we're thinking "Okay now let go Roy because if you keep-you're going to bang-" So Roy hung on all the way down, because he had no idea what's happening. And he bashed his ear on the ground, and he mushed it. I mean he really uh, he-he injured it badly. It's 50 year-I'll see him in a few weeks. It's 50 years later. He has what we call a cauliflower ear. You know what? It can be repaired. You think Roy is ever going to have that repaired? No way! Are you kidding? His badge of honor, that's proof that he dropped the school giant! No way-so this giant is down, Roy got up. We should run run. He doesn't know why, he doesn't even know-we said run. He took seven or eight and said--then he came back. It was his moment. Life has its defining moments. He reared back and he kicked Carter in an inch in an expose rib area. God forgive me but that's actually my favorite part of the story.

[Audience laughs]

And uh, no I've-I've prayed about it and I'm sure God will change my heart eventually.

[Audience laughs]

Although it has been 50 years! And then he hauled out of there. Did he ever ol--Carter came to moments later, got up, looked around he said, well I'm not going to quote him exactly

[Laughs]

because Carter wasn't sw-sweet about the guy, you know. So we said "A giant came behind you and started to choke you and then he ran away." Well Carter never got the end of the story, but when we gather in our scuzzy little hotels for our reunions, and we do it because we're a bunch of cheapskates, we're going to you know why go to the Hyatt Regency if you can get a hotel 6 you know? And we gather, and we look around to see if Carter's there, because you know he had so many years in school he could go to any reunion he wanted, he could pick any decade, when he's not there we throw Roy on our shoulders and we we run him around and people look at these old silly old people and they think what are they doing. We're rejoicing at the fall of the giant.

[Clears throat]

Now they said at Talbot, if you tell a story you've got to tie it in with your message. Here's-here-here the here's the transition.

[Clears throat]

We we all have giants in our lives. That was-well it's the truth, it's the truth. I'm here to tell you, if Carter hasn't kicked you you gotta keep your eyes open, 'cause he-he's out there. For the next few moments, I want to address a very well known Sunday school story. I don't want to talk about not just the Giants of life that come in, but hardships, and frustrations, and what you do

[Clears throat]

when the hard time comes, because I'm your friend. I'm very optimistic, I'm very enthusiastic about life, I love to preach we are more than conquerors to Christ who loved us. But Peter tells us, and Peter learned it well, that when you hit the hardships of life and you get through those by the grace of God--it is the grace of God--uh that the pure gold in our lives comes out. The dross is consumed and the gold is refined. So we're talking this morning about the giants of life, we're talking about the hardships and the story, he says joyfully as he picks out his save on over the counter nine ninety-five glasses, is told in Numbers Chapter 13. You have turned, and I am finding the passage. The Israelis uh, get to the uh Promised Land. God tells them it's yours and that's phenomenal. That is phenomenal to think that you have the battle won before it begins. So that was very gracious of God to do that. He could have said "Form the committee" for God so loved the world He gave his son but men form committees. He could have said "form the committee, get together, pool your ideas and then let's see where we go from there." But He didn't. In his grace, He let them know that they were going to take the land, they were going to be the victors.

So, twelve tribes um, uh with their uh, their groups together, they pick their-wouldn't you? What kind of a spy would you pick. I wouldn't-eh, I'd want somebody that's a little bit sneaky, a little bit sleazy and can get through the small spots, but I'd some want somebody that's got a huge heart, I'd want somebody that's courageous, I would certainly want somebody representing me that believed Jehovah God, When He said you're going to win! I mean, so I'd say to my spy if I was the captain of the tribe, I'd say "So, Gad"--that's one of the names actually--"So Gad". His- his son was E. Gad.

[Laughs lightly]

So hey "So Gad, you're going into the land, you know your job?" "Yeah to spy it out to see how- if we can win." "No no no you got it wrong! Got it wrong, you're going in to determine the way it's gonna happen, but the victory is God's! OK you got it? Maybe we need another spy--". So these were not little wimpy Junior High uh, junior varsity spies, they-I think they would be the best they can send. And of course, uh happiness is seeing the text, they came back to Moses 40 days later. Anytime you take a test and there's a question on days or years in the Bible, good hint. Just put down 40. Usually it's really pretty good. Thinking back to Moses and Aaron, and the whole Israelite community at Kadish in the desert of Paran. There--by the way I've been there. No I don't have my slides. Yes I plan to go again. Who would like to--well we'll we'll do that later. All right.

There, they reported to them and to the whole assembly, and showed them the fruit of the land. They these ten, the majority report, gave Moses this account. Now all uh ten didn't speak, so they picked their best spokesman who uh could say it well, and he could do it directly, and I'm sure that this guy rehearsed it before his wife the night before. They gave him this account--by the way I just need to say this, uh Dr. Cook introduced his wife, I'm so sorry that Hilda--that's my- you picture a little chubby German maid, but she's a babe, ah she's a babe. I'm sorry that Hilda isn't here but she's babysitting the grandkids. And she said "I think it's unfair that I would have to write the message and then listen to you butcher it in chapel." So she's not-she's not here but, may maybe later. Okay. Where were we. Okay. Oh, the spies and they're ready to speak. "We

went to the land. Here's its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even de-saw the descendants of Enoch there."

If you have a uh margin reference or any kind of cross reference, you uh see a reference to giants, to very-to to a large, not one but two giant tribes, and at the end of the chapter they're referring them to the descendants of Enoch the Nephilim, they actually saw a giant tribe. On this campus, twenty, about twenty years ago, uh walked a guy named George Bell. We called him George Bell he's swell, seven foot eight inches tall. Huh? I didn't I didnt know, no I mean, I've seen six-we have two six eight little guys this year that are playing on the team or six nine. But George Bell was seven foot eight inches tall. And coach said at the end of the year, if George had ever let-learned, catch ball pivot and slam ball through a hoop in sequence, he would have been the best we ever had. He was terrible! The team was thirty-nine wins, one loss. The one loss was the national championship. Biola was booed at the National that George didn't play because he was terrible. But he's a real swell guy, and I'm sure he fell in other areas where he did well--giants aren't always that tough. That's what I wanted to say.

So we're now-now we're back at now we're back in the passage. The Amalekites live in Negev. Hittites, Jebusites, Amirates live in the old country. The Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan. They had heard about these people, they had fear in their hearts. Their hearts were melting like butter. The next chapter says that these people went through all kinds of emotional turmoil. Then Caleb silenced the people, not the spy reporters. 'Cause there was only one or two of them. Silence the people because the people were all going "Ohhh huhhh rumble rumble rumble. Cowardice cowardice chicken liver. You know what can we do?" Silence the people

before Moses and said "We should go up." I like this guy. We don't get guys like this in Chapel because he only does one verse. No "We should go up and take possession of the land for we can certainly do it!"

I mean he had his stuff down. He believed God, he saw the land, he saw the giants, and he was ready to go. But the man who'd gone up with him said "We can't attack those people. They are stronger than we are." I want to ask you a question is that true, or is that just supposi-they didn't have a chance to prove that. I doubt seriously that any of the 40 of the 12 spies got in any serious rumbles in their 40 days in the land. So, now, you have the voice of of uh of cowardice and fear speaking out. That can happen in the midst of hardships if we don't have the promise of God, and we don't keep a focus on who this is all about.

Uh, Rick Warren made multi millions reminding us in this uh, uh well well-known book that life is not about us, it's all about God, and His grace, and His power. And once we grab that, we don't need the limelight. We get to watch Him make us victorious every time. "They're stronger than we are." They spread among the Israel-Israellis a bad report. One translation says a wicked. They said "The land we explor devours those living!" And didn't devour you twelve, you guys must've stayed under uh guard pretty well, "All the people--whoops--we saw there are of great size. We saw the Nephilim there, the descendants of Enoch" --here's the other giant tribe from the Nephilim, and here is their most truthful statement. "We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes and we looked the same to them."

[In accent] So grasshopper. Ha ha. What shall we do-do. Well you know the story, you honestly do. And you know that because of the vote of Joshua and Caleb, in spite of their vote, because of the vote of the other ten, God punished those people for a 40 year period. Now here's the interesting part to me. And uh, if we have uh second Corinthians I think we can get it ready. Joshua and Caleb said "We can take them!" The other 10 said "We-we're dead meat." God basically made his declaration in Chapter 14 that you guys, you don't need a lesson in uh, in victory and victory dancing, you need a lesson in backpack one-oh-one. You need a lesson in wilderness wondering. And isn't this-have you ever thought about this? The ones who believed God went into the boonies with the other. And for 40 years they suffered the same thing the others did.

But, folks, and here's the gold that we'll pluck out in the next few minutes, I believe with all of my heart that the reason Joshua, and Caleb, and men, and women in this student body, and mothers, and fathers, and relatives, and brothers, and sisters who are faced with heavy heavy hardships and trials, I really believe that the major difference is that they've learned the truth that Caleb and Joshua obviously had in their heart, that little small of Tarsus shared in Second Corinthians 10. Good. Oh good I'm glad you're there C.J. because Rebekah worked me hard. She jumped the verses that made me-there they are. And I just want you to look at these as we wrap this up this morning. "For though we walk in the flesh--" here I am here I am. This is all the flesh I have, 68 years old, five foot six, hundred and--

[Muffles sound]

--pounds OK. That's me. We won't have each one share-but the energy and the flesh I have found out, that the energy of the flesh falls far short. Ten years ago I thought I was actually pretty good shape for a 58 year old guy, and the doctor looked at me and he said "You've got cancer." And I said "Well I don't want cancer." He said "No it's not bad, you have Hodgkin's. If you have to have cancer, it's the easiest one to beat." And I did, by the grace of God 10 years later I'm a little bit Froggy, and I'm a little bit groggy, and I'm a little bit raspy, but by the grace of God I can still preach and teach the Word of God. And I learned what Scripture says, "Though we walk in the flesh we are not waging war according to the flesh." No. What is the next--thank you C.J.--"for the weapons of our warfare are not on the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds." Next verse C.J. "We destroy arguments" and that's basically what was happening here, "and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God" and brothers and sisters, "and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." I want to ask you a question, how do you do that? How did Caleb do that? Have you noticed individuals, uh maybe on campus or off from your church, your family, or your background, and you see that they don't b-march to the beat of the regular drum, but to another drum, and they seem to be individuals who have a heart filled with vision, and courage, and passion.

I want to tell you, this passage of Scripture was probably burned into the heart of Caleb. He's just a kid, forty five, well looks young to me, when he and Joshua made this claim. Then 40 years later, having been back in the boonies with all of these others who are dying off, God brings them back into the land. And ladies and gentlemen, these same men had vision, and courage, and zest, and zeal in such a way that you would think that they just got there and voted today. To bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ is stated another way by little

small of Tarsus, the apostle Paul, in Philippians when he said "Let this mind be anew, which was also in Christ Jesus."

You know why we emphasize a chapel, and ministry, and scripture memory, and and outreach, we emphasize it because it's the washing of the water of the Word of God that keeps our hearts cleansed and pure, and our minds stir stirred and motivated. Will you face hardships? I'm here as your chaplain to tell you, you will I-as the guy on TV says, I guarantee it, you will. You absolutely will. How you face those and the Giants in your life, will be for you, many of you, a defining moment, a defining semester, a defining year of your life.

Tell you what gives me excitement as I wrap up this chapel, that should give you excitement. What gives me excitement after 40 years is the chance that God has given me to invest in lives and realize that every one of you here, every one of you here, is not only precious in the eyes of God, but you are your a rare product in His arsenal. As we develop the mind of Christ as we seek, guys and gals, purity in every area of our lives, as we bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, the Giants fall one after another. And although the hardships are there, it's the pure gold that comes out at the end. Joni Earackson Tada, this is probably 30, 30 years later now, is a quadriplegic, and unless God touches her body, He hasn't yet, He never will but, she-but because of her injury, and her mindset, and a willingness to praise God through the hard times of life, she has touched millions of people with the truth of the power of God.

Will there be hardships? There will! Is Carter around the corner? He is! Some of you have already met him. Do you understand the principle? So do I. Are you-are you willing to pay the

price to bring every thought into the captivity of Jesus Christ. How exciting it is when individuals from this student body, that's another fun thing about being the old guy and watching the stories, get excited about "Lord, what could you do in my life?"

Would you like to hear one more story? Thank you I'll use this to close. Name is Toby. It must be four years ago, it actually may be five now. We were at the conclusion of spiritual renewal week, it's simply a regular week of chapels but it's usually where one individual speaks uh, each day so that there is a series that we can connect. Of course, I love this story because Eric Tonas was the speaker and the-Er-Eric Tonas not only took scripture, but he took illustrations from across the campuses of the United States, and Eric uh challenged the student body with what God had been doing on campuses all across the United States. At at this particular time, at Mooney, at Wheaton, at Bethel, and in St. Paul, Minnesota, and several other schools, and he concluded the Friday by saying why couldn't this "Why couldn't God the Holy Spirit uniquely pour out a revival on this campus that would shake the world?" And it was Friday, and he had two or three more minutes and he sat down!

Huh I wan-if-he would put his head in his hands and he was praying. I wanted to lean over and say "Go back up there. Let's sing "Just as I Am." Let's call people to respond. Let's let's see what God the Holy Spirit would do." I didn't have to, a guy named Toby, in the gym, in the far left back corner stood. Nobody invited Toby or anybody else, and it was stone quiet in that place, like it is here now. And Toby stood up and he yelled, he actually cried, "Why couldn't God do something like this at Biola?" And he actually started to repeat that again, but his voice broke and I think he actually was in tears. And he sat down. That was at 10:20 in the gym.

Two individuals came to the microphone. I thought they came together, but they know-no-and I was standing up there, because it was quiet and I was just thinking "God, if this is a God moment, you gotta do something here." So these two came, walking, and I thought the gal came with the guy but she didn't. They just kind of fought their way through the crowd together, and she confessed sin in her life, and it was appropriate because it had impacted a number of individuals, and gals from her residents came, gathered around her. And actually they want to pray with her behind the microphone. But, the other guy wanted to speak, so we moved them to the side and he shared in his life. And for two hours, in that gym, probably five years ago now, God the Holy Spirit poured out His Spirit on this place. People who weren't even there in Chapel, heard about it in the next two hours, and found their way back into the gym.

I believe this year's student body is still being impacted by the decisions that were made and the power of God that was kicked loose in that chapel. I know that it was God the Holy Spirit, but He uses people taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. My prayer has been all 40 years and continues, that God the Holy Spirit unloose, uncork a revival and ministry on this campus that is unprecedented in the history of the school. Believe He can, I believe He will. Lord that's my prayer. Make us faithful hearers and doers of your word. In Christ name I pray, amen. By the power vested me, you are dismissed. I understand we have to hustle out of here quickly and the preacher has gone overtime.

[Applause]