

The Giants of Life

Ron Hafer

- Mark

Biola university, how are all of you doing today?

[Cheers]

- Mark

Good? OK. Today we have with us a very, very special speaker. When I was probably, I don't know, I I was too young to remember, but I heard Ron Hafer speak for the very first time, and I didn't remember that I had ever heard him speak until I saw him speak again. And, uh, this was when I was a senior in high school. And I think it was during the summer. And he came to our church for for something to speak and, um, and I was, uh, my roommate the-, my current roommate now, who was a good friend of mine in high school, had interested me in Biola. And after I saw Ron Hafer speak, I said, you know, I really seriously need to check into Biola. And he gave me a little card to fill out and everything, and I filled it out. And I'm here today and Ron played a significant part in that. Today, Ron is going to deliver a message that he wanted to deliver sometime ago last semester.

But because of something that happened with the chapel service, something wonderful that happened during a chapel service, he wasn't able to give that message. So he's here to give it to us today. Let's give a warm round of applause for our chaplain, Mr. Ron Hafer.

[Applause]

- Ron Hafer

Thank you, Mark. (Clears throat). About 20 years ago, which wasn't my first year back on the staff, but it was fairly early on, and the gym, was really just recently completed. So it might even have been about twenty one years ago or so. There was a guy, I think he lived down in Long Beach then named Andre Crouch. And nobody really knew much about him. And we had the chapel board, of which I was part, recommended that he come. No one had heard him. So no one knew if this guy was any good. And we had not this piano, but a really pathetic one. And, uh, and he came and we did not know that he sang and played from the piano. And I'm not sure that we had boom mikes in those days. So I, what I remember was not only the joy of introducing him, but because there wasn't a boom mike for his ministry that morning, I got to sit and hold hold the microphone for him which was really fun. And like Lanore, you know, where he just kind of starts, oh, woah, a couple of times. A couple of times. It was my great privilege while he was getting breath to grab the mic and go, "Yeah, yeah," ya know-

[Laughter and applause]

So we-, Andre and I ministered together. Ya know, it's fun. But now, unfortunately, we've discovered the boom mic and my ministry is limited

[Laughter]

Numbers, chapter 13. For those of you have your Bibles, those, of course, at Biola who have the passage memorized will realize very quickly that it's the, uh, it's the story of the children of Israel who arrive at the first shot at the promised land. The spies go in for God so loved the world that He sent His Son, but men choose committees and the spies went in. 10 junior varsity variety who were frightened literally half to death because of the giants in the land.

Two varsity types, Joshua and Caleb, who came back with the report. I want to focus this morning for the next few moments. In fact, I want to do it till the end of chapel. But they said when I was training at Talbot, "Throw out phrases like next few moments, it builds false hope." So for the next few moments, I just want to share with you. I'll focus on the giants of life. I'm in, I'm going to consider from this passage the giants of opportunity and only God knows in your life what those are. And then for some of us, the giants of opposition. Who is it? What is it that stands between you and the free flow of God's Holy Spirit? Totally unrestrained to do not only what He wants to in your life and mine, but in this student body. The giants of life.

Hundreds of years ago, I used to say when I was small. People look at me and say, "Were you ever smaller?"

So I say, "When I was younger," in my junior high years, we would leave flood junior high back in Denver, Colorado, its actually Englewood, Colorado. Oh yeah. Woo-woo! And uh-

[Laughter]

And some of us had been from Alaska. Woo! So. And we had two options. One was a section called the Romance Section, which was really overrated. Let me tell you. Where we walked and, and looked at our girlfriends' chins in those days, because that's all we get. And the other section of campus was what was called Rumball section. And in Rumball section at our junior high, I think in most around the world, there was a fight almost every night. God forgive me. I loved it and showed up to not compete, mind you. (High pitched voice) Because, (regular voice) because at my size, I didn't fight. But to watch the rumble, I was in the seventh, eighth, ninth grade junior high. One of the two combatants, I've checked the crowd to make sure that he's not here. No, he's not. So let me describe him in detail. Carter was big and dumb and ugly, picture massive. I mean, it's all I have to illustrate with, but picture bulky.

And he was, he was in ninth grade. But Carter, honestly, Carter drove his car to school in junior high. Only the Lord knows how old he really was. And he had a full, full beard. I resented him because he had hair on his chest. And some of us still are working on that.

[Laughter]

And he, uh, he went on to, uh, experience seven or eight wonderful years in high school as well.

But

[Laughter]

So, Carter, Carter would pick. Oh, (laughing) you know him? Carter would pick an opponent out of the crowd. No, no. No one would say, "Hey I'll fight Carter." So he would pick him out. And so my little buddy and I, we arrived at Rumble City and Carter was fighting. But he was always on the card. And then his opponent, not willingly, was my little buddy's, big brother. Picture tall, about as tall as Carter, but skinny as a rail and scared half to death.

And so he pulled him out of the crowd. And then Carter would always. Yeah, he would never hit 'em right away. He would thump 'em. Well, on this guy, what would normally be the chest area. And as he began to thump him, this guy would they would always get a little embarrassed and so they would just really out of embarrassment, strike back. My dad, who is kind of a combative sort of person, taught us the principle that's not really from the scripture, but a good one if you're going to fight, win and win.

[Laughter]

And, uh, I learned the board, the board principle, the board hit him and run early. But this guy, after several shoves, he pushed back really to save face, which was, he didn't do. Then Carter hit him in face. He fell to the ground, face down. We thought, "Well, that's over." But it wasn't, because bullies are like this; giants are like this. Carter jumped on him and began to push his face in the dirt.

And I thought, "(Voice cracking) Some-, Somebody ought to do something here." My little buddy, who was not known for his incredible bravery, had, had one of those moments. In life

there, there is the moment and this was his. He screamed and he was, he did that frequently, so that wasn't a different. And then without giving a great deal of thought, he ran and jumped on the back of this gargantua guy who is pounding the snuff out of his brother.

And almost the minute he hit. He had that look that said, "Dear Heavenly Father, what have I done and what shall I do?" Now he starts to wrap these little gangly legs, little scrawny-, around this gargantuan body. And Carter now is trying to swat off this little fly, you know, back there, as his brother is losing his life on the ground, you know. And, uh, and then kind of in a desperation move. We remember this well, he he was having trouble hanging on, Carter had like 30 inch neck or whatever. So he wraps his- well, OK, maybe exaggerated a little-. So he wraps his arm around and he grabs on. In the LAPD, they call that locking them off or choking them off. And what happens is that there is a shortage of of blood and oxygen flowing to the brain, which we had suspected of Carter for a number of years.

[Laughter]

But now, (laughing) but now we knew that were experiencing a shortage of oxygen because he began to do what the junior highers was in those days called the fish.

[Laughter]

And he just started to pass out. My little buddy had no idea, he was it's kinda like riding a tiger for him, it's fun 'til you have to get off. But then now Carter, Carter is passing out. My little

Hafer – The Giants of Life

buddy has no idea how he's going to get out of this alive. And so he rode Carter all the way down. Carter felt no pain. My little buddy felt pain, but it's, because it split his ear wide open, but it's OK because Carter was out and that was the primer. Now he was down, still holding on. And we said to him, "Get off and run!"

[Laughter]

Which he did. He got off. He had no idea, if he was a Christian, he would have stopped and said, "God, it is so good."

[Laughter]

Or if he was Lenore, he'd say, "WOAH, God is-," So he took about three or four steps. And then he realized, he realized that for some reason in God's sovereignty, he was going to get out of this alive. So what we remember very well, having reflected on it at every class reunion, is when he ran back, took a quick, swift kick into Carter's side and then ran. We thought, "Right on, right on."

[Laughter]

Carter-, why? Why would we applaud something like that? But we do. God forgive us, we do. We kind of like to see the giants get theirs. At, at in high school and then at all of our class reunions. And I was at, my-, dear Heavenly Father, my 30th reunion. I walked into the room and

I thought, "They-re, they're all old people!" And then I thought, "I'm one of them!" What we reflected on was we remembered the bully. But we what we really love to do is see when my little buddy who comes in to those class reunions, although he looks older, he's still a little scrawny guy. He will always be the little guy who dropped the giant. That's, that was his title for life.

Meanwhile, back in Numbers chapter 13, the Israelites, the Israelis have come to their land. God said, and Dr. Mitchell's gonna be proud of me because what he takes four weeks to give you, I'm gonna cover in six minutes, an Old Testament survey. The Lord said, but not as well, mind you. The Lord said to the Israelis, "The land is yours." In fact, there was never any doubt as to whether or not they could have the land God promised them the land. It's a land flowing with milk and honey. The grapes are juicy and it's a land of opportunity, it's your land. Wherever you plant your your Reeboks, your L.A. gear, your sandals. The land is yours. Go in and claim it. Twelve spies went in. Twelve spies went out. I know there's a junior song. No, we won't sing it at this time. As they gather together. Moses, who wants to hear the spies report, is open to what the Lord is going to do. And the spies then give their report. First of all, the junior varsity group. And then the varsity. Yes, I have a new pair of Savon glasses. You say, "Can you see us with them?" No. "Can you see the scripture?" Yes, that's what's very crucial. Verse twenty seven of chapter 13. The spies are gather. Here's the setting. "Thus they told him," this is the 10, "and said, 'We went into the land where you sent us. And it certainly does flow with milk and honey. This is its fruit.' Showing them a display of everything that was there. 'Nevertheless, the people'" verse 28, "'who live in the land are strong and the cities are fortified and very large. Moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there.'" And the speed readers

who have gone ahead realize that the children of the descendants of Anak are the children of the Nephilim, this giant tribe where they estimate them anywhere from eight to nine and a half foot tall, though, whatever, that's that is humongous.

And they saw this giant tribe that lived on a land and that stuck in their minds. The land was there. The promises of God were there. The great opportunities were there. But when they saw the Giants, they were absolutely petrified. The giants of life, giants of opportunity. But to them, they became giants of opposition. And then verse twenty-nine tells us where the different tribes are gathered. You say, are you choosing to skip that? Yes, I am.

"Then Caleb quieted the people," verse 30, "before Moses." Why'd he have to quiet 'em? There was a buzz and a hum. Nah, giants. One guy says they're 10 feet tall. The whole land is full of them. "He quieted the people and he said," I'm pretty sure that we don't have his entire report, but it's condensed. But what we have is good. "We should, by all means, go up and take possession of the land, for we shall surely overcome it."

It's kind of like I call for the question. "But the men who had gone up with him," verse 31, "said, 'We're not able to go against the people for they are too strong for us.'" Now they begin to read their cowardly feelings into the report and verse 32 says, "So they gave out to the Sons of Israel a bad report," another translation says, "Wicked or evil." And the concept is that they're piling their own fear on top of this report. "Which they had spied out saying, 'The land through which we have gone in spying it out is the land that devours its inhabitants and ALL the people,'" now

they're all giants, "'whom we saw in the land are men of great size. They're also, we saw the Nephilim, the Sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim.'" And this is an accurate. This is an accurate phrase, "They said, 'And we became like grasshoppers in our own sight. And so we were in their sight also grasshopper. What shall we do?'" So Moses called for the question and they voted Joshua and Caleb down flat. They there weren't there were not power groups of people that said, "Jehovah God can pull this off. He's promised us the land. Let's believe Him. Let's do what God said we can do. Not in our strength, but in His strength." Well, they didn't. They believed the fearful committee who said, "Those people will devour us."

And God said to His leaders. This is a Hafer-ized version. Not yet on the market. "These people do not. They don't need a lesson in taking the land now. They need a lesson in backpack one seven and wilderness wondering." So He turned them around. And for the next 40 years, that entire crew, as you know, died off. And they have an opportunity 40 years later to return to the land and have a second shot at it.

As we think of the giants in our life, of course, I've been thinking about it. I want you to think of two, basically two questions this morning and maybe you've already begun to identify what I would call a giant of opportunity or a giant of opposition. The giant of opportunity, regardless of what year we are or (mimicking older voice) how many years some of us have been around here. The giant of opportunity would be some phenomenal opportunity that although it's it's extremely great, it's really too much for us in our own resources, in our own strength. We just couldn't handle it. As Billy Graham would say, (southern accent) "You can't do it on your own." But it's possible and it's possible by the end of this year or during this year that as the Spirit of God

works and moves. And we are willing to respond individually and corporately as a student body. It's entirely possible this year at Biola that we will see it, that we-, that, we will take hold of giants of opportunity that will literally change not only our own lives, but this student body.

I'm not jealous for other schools and other eras when I hear that God has worked and moved in a revival way at where He's moved and stirred in student bodies. In a sense, I am, because I've continually asked the question, "Why should we who teach and preach and share the word of God? Why should we have to look to another era, another time, another school, another place in the United States where the hand of God is moving mightily?" Would it be possible if we began to lay hold of the giants of opportunity and realize that "It's not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord. Wouldn't it be phenomenal if this year we saw a mighty outpouring of the Spirit of God on our student body? I'd been praying that in my years here, and I think from time to time we've seen the brush fires and little pockets of fire and smoke that are going. But it would be my desire and I believe that there is at least a nucleus here, here that are praying that the Spirit of God would work and move in a phenomenal way.

For some of us, the giant will be a giant of opposition. It's something, it's some person, its some situation, it's some sin, some thought pattern that constantly stands between you and the Lord. And it's no secret to anyone when we make the statement that those of us here aren't living in sin, sinless perfection. So this would be a tremendous opportunity for many of us to say to the Lord, "Lord, I'm going to give You this giant of opposition. I cannot handle it." During my years here, this is, I think, beginning my 24th, I think without exception every year there have been a few who have come who have a phenomenal church background, and they look great on their reports

to get into the school. But very frankly, in your own heart, you realize now that you're here that you don't know Christ the Savior and Lord of your life and the giant of opposition would simply be for you, letting Christ take care of the sin that's in your life, trusting Him as Savior and Lord and Master of your life.

So the giants of opportunity, giants of opposition. The question would be to identify. The second challenge would be whether you and I would be willing to say to the Lord, "Lord, I give You this situation. I give You this person." Maybe an illustration from scripture helps. The 40 years have passed. The new nation is there. Joshua and Caleb, now octogenarians in their 80s, have arrived back to the land with all these young whippersnappers, and they're settled in the Book of Joshua on the banks of the Jordan.

God says to them, "It's your second opportunity. Are you ready to go?" And they're, they're. And perhaps God has given them the principle from Isaiah: "My thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are My ways, your ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts. But will you dare to follow My way and to think My thoughts, to bring every thought into captivity, to let Me- to renew, be renewed by the inner man? Would you dare?" He's saying to this brand new group of Israelis, "to not be like your forefathers, to have something new written of you." And they're saying, "We heard what happened with our parents. We would like to get into the land." The Lord says that to uh Joshua now a few years older, "Well, here's the Jordan River, which is flooding."

Imagine these Israelis who had been in the boonies. That's hard for them to find water anywhere. And when they do, it's hard to get it. Now they see the Jordan River, which they tell me is not a lovely blue flowing body of water, but grody and brown. They tell me, because I haven't been there. I feel the student body should send me and I'd bring back great slides and I could just tell you. But from what I hear and just from classes I've taken, the Jordan River is there. Not only is it ugly, but it is at flood stage. So I don't know how you begin to illustrate. That's why Spielberg hasn't done this. We know how you cross the Red Sea because we've been to Universal Studios. But how do you illustrate a Jordan River that's flooding out of its banks? And God says to the captain, to the host of the Lord Joshua, chapter three. That's your assignment, should you choose it, Mr. Phelps. "Here, Here is the land you want to go in?" "We want to go in." "What's your plan?" "We've never seen so much water." God says, "Well, all right, here's My plan. Get your people together in a quiet, orderly fashion." One million quiet, orderly fashion Israelis. Great miracle in the Old Testament.

[Laughter]

"Be quiet. And here's what I want you to do in a, in a signified manner, walk into the water."

"Whoa! That's not the way I would have-" "My thoughts are not your thoughts. My ways."

"Yeah. You've got that." The word of God says, that as they began to walk into the water, God stacked the water. It's already out of the banks. No wonder Spielberg. So you have the flooding Jordan River that's stacked, just rising higher and higher as one million frightened but eager Israelis are saying to one another, "Just keep moving, honey."

[Laughter]

And finally, finally, they get into the land and God lets the water crash behind them. And the good news is they're in the land. I mean, (voice cracks) it's, they're in their. (lowers voice) They're in their land. The challenge is there's no turning back.

Around the campfires that night, they didn't say to one another, "That Joshua. Far out. He's a tremendous guy. Shalom." I mean-

[Laughter]

He's-. Think of that. Who would have thought of walking into the water and God stacking? That was- they-. I'm sure that as they were sharing, they were thinking, "His ways are not our ways. Yeah. His thoughts are not our thoughts. But if we'll follow His ways, if we'll bring thought into captivity. God can do miracles in our life."

Maybe one other illustration will help. Caleb is 85. He returned-. We have a neighbor that's 83. And when he comes out to water his lawn and clip his hedges we're three. He's a wonderful guy and he loves the Lord. But, I mean, eighty-three isn't a marathon age normally.

Here is Caleb at 85, who demands in Joshua chapter 14 what God promised him. And the word of God tells us that of the twelve tribe leaders, there was one who is eighty five years old, who came back into the land demanded from Joshua, who got the promise from Moses, and he

walked with his with his army this eighty five year old Israeli general up the mountain and at the top of the mountain are the are the Anakcome, the children of the Nephilim. These nine-foot, six-inch giants and the word of God. It doesn't tell the story. You say, "Are you going to tell it?" Yeah. Just for a moment or two. Because the word of God says "It's too quick." The word of God says that he did it. But I picture an 85-year-old general walking up this mountain on the top of the mountain are nine-foot giant. Let's say, let's be gracious. Eight and a half. Just let's say a few of them are pygmy types, eight, eight and a half foot tall, and they are the spy that's out. And they say, "What's, what's going on down or in this case, what's what's coming up today?" And they say, "Well, we see a little group of Israelis. And frankly, it's amazing because the old guy who is leading them, look at the calves on that sucker. I mean, he looks like he's in pretty good shape, but he's eighty-five if he's a day."

And then they hear a general or second lieutenant, whatever. Caleb yelling something like, "Get off my mountain or else, you know." And the next thing that is written in the children of the Anakcome, the children of the Nephilim law is that that eighty-five-year-old general, not in his own strength and power, in the strength and power of God, drove the giants off of the mountain. You do not find them in the rest of history because he drove them not only off of the mountain, but out of the land.

He's the only one of the 12 tribe leader representatives who claimed his land and did exactly what God said to do. "Not by my-, it's not by power, it's by My Spirit," says the Lord. "My ways are not your ways. Listen to Me." It's a principle that we already know. His economy is different.

Hafer – The Giants of Life

He does things differently. The world says, "Get all you can, can all you get." Jesus said, "The greater-, greatest among you will be the servant of all."

(Singing) "If you want to be great." Well, Ann Kimmel does it, why couldn't I try a little singing along. The Word of God says that the principle in the scripture is to forget what the world system is and trust what God is said. God said, "You give Me your giants. And if they're giants of opposition, I'll drop them before you." But God says He does it His way. And in His strength and in His power.

Giants come in all different sizes and shapes. I do some junior high speaking. You say, "We would never have guessed." And at a camp called Pine Summit, where a number of our people have worked and attended. There was a little guy that I've called Ralphie for years. I don't know if-, his real his real name, but that's what he went by by a nickname in this camp when I would speak, unlike this group, which gave me applause even before I started. He would say things during the message like, "That isn't true," or, or "When does this end," or "Oh, not you again!"
(Laughs)

[Laughter]

And I was saying, "Thank you, Lord, for this wonderful-." No, I was saying, "Save him or take him home, Lord"

[Laughter]

Ralphie, Ralphie was literally, he was literally the giant of opposition in the camp, about three and a half feet of giant of opposition with a gigantic mouth and a tremendous problem. On Wednesday morning. And I was so defeated just by this one character because the Spirit of God, it seemed that nothing was happening, that we thought we would schedule the Holy Spirit early to work and move on the camp. So Wednesday morning, I was going to prepare the natives for a response on Wednesday night.

And I made a statement like, "But Jesus always called people publicly, so I want you to be thinking of a response that you need to make publicly." By the way, that's a good idea biblically, because Jesus did that. I think that's why it's always good for some other people to know when commitments are made. So I was I said, "Tonight we're going to have an opportunity to give you an invitation. And if you have something that you need to settle before the Lord or you don't know Christ as Savior, we're going to give you a chance to respond publicly because God, Jesus always called people publicly."

So I ask the question, "How many of you need to make a decision like that?" I was gonna give them a quiet, stupid me with junior highers. I'm going to give them a quiet moment of reflection and and Ralphie. So while the others were reflecting Ralphie just walked up and he stood and I thought, "Not you, Fred." (Laughs) And he just stood there. And so I put my hand over the mic and I said, "Why are you here, Ralphie?"

And he said to me, "What didn't you say, you know, publicly?" And I said, "Why -are you standing here because you want to make a decision? And he said, "Yes." And I ask him what his decision was. And he said it was to become a Christian. I thought, "Leave it to Ralphie. He even gets saved off schedule, ya know?"

[Laughter]

So Ralphie, Ralphie trusted Christ with his heart and his life. And it's amazing what happened in that conference with just the catalyst of one, one life that was changed.

You've seen that. And I've seen it in student bodies. I haven't told you that, Ralphie. And I think this is part of his problem as far as his attitude. Ralphie had a cleft palate, a tear in the roof of his mouth, and it affected his hearing and his speech. He could barely speak and be heard. And you just couldn't tell what he was saying. Except when he yelled, which he frequently did. So Ralphie just took off spiritually. By the last night of camp. And because we're a camp type people, you understand what it would be like on the final night of camp? I said in the chapel at Pine Summit, I said, "I'm not speaking the night." Yay! Yay! "But I thought I'd give you an opportunity if the Lord has done something to share." There was a microphone over here and over here and they began to memorize the tiles on the floor and look down. Except for one, you guessed it, Ralphie, who came up. Now there were microphones here in here. But Ralphie came and took mine just the way he was.

[Laughter]

And I said, "Sure." He said. Uh. He said, "I uh." And then he said to the group, "I'm going to sing a song." He could barely be understood in speaking. I thought, "This is it. It's gone. Write off the night, you know. Why are you doing this to me, Lord?" So we had a gal that had picked out. She went to the piano, began to play; it was very something very, very simple. And as Ralphie sang and frankly, he was nowhere near the tune, but it was as though the Lord zoomed in on that auditorium and kind of said to every heart, including mine, "This is not your time. This is m-, My thoughts are, not My ways or not your way. Watch what I do." So he sang and physically, humanly speaking. He butchered the song. But you, you couldn't convince anybody there that it wasn't a lovely fragrance, that it wasn't a beautiful tune. He finished. I was sitting there blubbering like a baby. Get that guy out of here. You know, is he the leader? And people began to cheer and applaud. Two the counselors, ran up not knowing what to do. So they thought, "Do something." So they threw Ralphie on their shoulders and they began to run him around this auditorium.

[Laughter]

As the junior highers are going (mimics cheering). And Ralphie is, of course, doing the victory sign. Except-

[Laughter]

Hafer – The Giants of Life

Except half way around on his lap, everyone noticed, and Ralphie realized that this was not his hour, his moment. So halfway around, from his own heart, he just changed to one way with Jesus. And then bedlam broke out. They stood on the chairs. They were going "Nahnahnah, ahhh Jesus!" They, they plopped him back in front of me as the place was just completely unglued. Ralphie smiled. He said, "Should I sing again?" I said, "No, no, nooo, I don't think." So. And then. And then it quieted down just about as quickly as the noise had broken out. And I thought, "I wonder what we should do now." And I listened and I heard the voice of a girl. And then I looked up. It was one of the campers behind her in the line were about ten or fifteen others on both sides.

I've said for an hour. I'm sure that it was an hour and a half without ever a break in either line. And students and kids still standing there waiting to share for an hour and a half junior highers shared. Almost every one of them could be capsule commented into this phrase. (nasal voice) "Well, I wasn't going to share anything, but when Ralphie sang-"

"It's not by might nor by power, but it's by My spirit." I don't know the giant. (clears throat) But I know the giant killer, God in His strength and His mighty power, He can work a miracle in your life and mine and in the student body as we bring thoughts into captivity and our will into captive to Him.

Father, may we be faithful hearers and doers of Your word. Please work and move in our lives and begin that work in me, I pray in Jesus' strong name. And all God's people said?

Hafer – The Giants of Life

- Audience

Amen.

[Applause]

- Ron Hafer

By the authority invested in me, you are dismissed. Thank you.

[Applause and musical postlude]