**Week 3 – Courage in the face of opposition**

**Bible text: Numbers 13:17-33; 14:1-10,26-30; Joshua 14:6-12**

***Testimony subject – How have you found courage and hope in the face of opposition?***

**Introduction/Context**

* How would you describe the concept of opposition?
* In the world today, one in seven Christians are persecuted for their faith, and Christians are still being martyred. See World Watch List for more information – <https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/countries/>
* People may face opposition for their faith, especially if they are the only one holding their beliefs in their family, in a classroom or in the workplace.
* The story we will look at today is about opposition amongst fellow believers. Moses was seeking to discover the possibility of moving into the Promised Land. At God’s instruction he sent spies from each tribe to go on an undercover surveillance mission to test the viability of such a move.

**Seek what the Lord requires**

* Caleb and Joshua travelled with ten others to explore (Numbers 13,14). The ten came back and said it was too dangerous and the challenge was too big. However, Caleb and Joshua were sure that God would provide all that they needed to enter the land. But the majority were against the idea, so they did not move.
* Christians face opposition because the world around us wants to discredit our beliefs and our stand against the forces of evil.
* Caleb and Joshua trusted God. He had proved himself so many times before and they believed that nothing was impossible. So staying close to God and trusting him is important to those who are being opposed.

**The Importance of Community**

* Caleb and Joshua relied on one another. They worked together faithfully, encouraging the Israelites to trust in God’s promises and boldly urging them to enter the Promised Land despite the fear of the other spies.
* God places supportive people in our lives to guide and encourage us on our faith journey. Through their wisdom, love and prayers, they help us stay anchored in our beliefs and navigate challenges.
* These individuals serve as reminders of God’s presence and care, reflecting his grace through their actions. In moments of doubt or struggle, their companionship strengthens our trust in God and deepens our relationship with him.
* The Salvation Army is privileged to support many people facing opposition or hurt – including victims of domestic abuse and those affected by of human trafficking. For more information, see <https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/antitrafficking> and <https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/modern-slavery/supporting-survivors>

**Sometimes you have to wait**

* In Joshua 14, the same issue comes up again 45 years later. Caleb remained so sure of God’s leading that at 85 years old he is still willing to lead an attack and drive out the Anakites to march into Hebron.
* For those who are facing opposition now, it may require patience to wait whilst God changes the hearts of those opposing. In the meantime, stay close to God trusting him. There are so many Scriptures saying ‘Fear not’ or ‘Do not be afraid’ (actually 365 – one for each day of the year).
* Those of us who are not undergoing such opposition should be supporting in prayer and in any way that God lays on our hearts.
* For many Christians, the Bible is the place they come to, alone, scared, in secret because they are being opposed. Learning Scripture is a source of encouragement – such as Psalm 56; 1 Peter 3:13-17.

**Application and response**

* Jesus knew that there would be opposition for the disciples he was training. He taught them to pray the familiar words we know as the Lord’s Prayer. In time of struggle, we pray that God’s will may be done.
* The challenge for all Christians, especially those who are facing difficult people at any time, is forgiveness. If we do not forgive, we become bitter and angry, and the peace of God is not in us. It is one of the hardest things to pray for, but it is necessary to draw on God’s perfect peace, especially in the face of opposition.
* Therefore, pray for persecuted Christians. Then pray for those in your fellowship who are often opposed or experiencing hurt in their various settings. Finally, pray that our behaviour day by day may be authentic, forgiving, caring, welcoming to all we meet who may be facing issues we have no knowledge about.